

WHAT OTHERS SAY...

Pamela Christian has written an account of a dynamic Christian life that is instructive and illustrative of how a Christian should deal with Christian doctrine. Though the author leads us into many heavy subjects, *Renew Your Hope! Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs* avoids the deadening intellectualism that characterizes so much written on these subjects. It is, however, strong on personal experience and the application of Biblical truth to everyday life, I call Pamela Christian's perspective balanced and compliment her on how well she has integrated a Biblically balanced approach to life.

CHARLES H. KRAFT, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and Intercultural Communication at Fuller School of Intercultural Studies, Author and International Speaker

Pamela Christian's first book in her trilogy is *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*. This second volume is a perfect and necessary follow-up: *Renew Your Hope! Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs*. Having established the uniqueness and truthfulness of Christianity in her first book, she now digs deeply into the potential rewards available for anyone who appropriates and applies the promises inherent in biblical Christianity. Because of her own experiences of suffering and adversity, she is able to skillfully explain the ingredients of a spirit-filled life of victory with the compassion and insight only someone who has struggled through great obstacles can adequately put into plain words. Pamela's passion for helping Christians grow in faith, and for unbelievers to experience the life-changing power of Jesus Christ, shines through on practically every page. Her many testimonies of struggles and victories through faith in God—both her own and others—adds subjective confirmation to the objective biblical evidences she presents, which together confirm the power of God for those who put their trust in Jesus. This book is a must read for anyone who desires to grow in faith and maturity as a follower of Jesus Christ.

DAN STORY, M.A. Christian Apologetics, Author and Speaker

So often, Christians find themselves embracing either the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to the exclusion of apologetics or immersed in strictly left brain, factual defenses for the faith, while lacking an understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today. Pamela Christian provides the perfect balance—showing Christians how to experience the clarity, hope, and victory that is ours by the power and promises of God with the manifestation of the Gifts today through the lens of rational thought, logic, factual evidence, and a persuasive argument for

the truth of God's Word. This book is a much needed resource for Christians to grow in all areas of their faith.

BOB DUTKO, Christian Apologist and Nationally Syndicated Radio Talk-show Host

Pamela Christian is a friend of mine and someone I see living and walking in faith. She has had many life challenges like so many of us. I have seen her stand firm on God's promises and refuse to give in and quit. I so love how Pamela takes you step by step to help you understand *faith*, how it works and how you can use your faith in God to enjoy His will in your life. *Renew Your Hope! Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs* is full of great real-life stories that bring home the message loud and clear. You will learn about the love of God and His promises that will help every Believer succeed when life throws a curve ball.

TOM BARKEY, Ph.D., Church of Grace Lead Pastor, and Author

Pamela Christian's *Renew Your Hope!* is "best-in-class" reading for anyone who wants their connection to God to move from a frustrated quest for personal happiness to realized victorious "hope-FULL-ness". But watch out, your faith just might become confident, vibrant, and expectant of God's presence, power, and purposes, superseding anything that resembles cautious, dutiful, try-hard, self-preserving Christianity.

REV. DAVID MILLER, Chief Encouragement Officer, LifeLetter Ministries

I love this book, and I love Pamela Christian! I have personally known her for many years, and she is the *real deal*—a committed, passionate Christian with a heart to help others experience all that is available to them through Christ. As with her first book, her loving heart is evident, but even more with *Renew Your Hope!* Pamela shares many personal experiences—her failures and successes—wanting you to find the confident hope and personal breakthroughs you need. There are many competing voices making it difficult to discover and live in life-giving truth and hope. But Pamela and *Renew Your Hope!* provide a compassionate and reliable guide.

NANCY STAFFORD Actress, Speaker, and Author of *The Wonder of His Love: A Journey into the Heart of God*

Hope and faith are bound together in love. Pamela Christian explains the reasons for our faith, our hope, and God's love in this beautifully-written book. You will learn so much about yourself and your faith journey as you pour through the pages.

Pam is a sincere Christian who can make the complex easy to understand—she walks the talk and knows the material about which she writes from personal experience. In today’s confusing, and often immoral, society, *Renew Your Hope!* is a tool you will be able to use to navigate your way to a better faith life.

DEB HAGGERTY, Consultant, Editor, Speaker, and Christ-follower

As Pamela Christian clearly explains, belief is a necessary condition to see “mountain-moving faith” at work. If your faith is not as dynamic and transformational as you read about on the pages of Scripture, *Renew Your Hope! Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs* can help you unlock your mind and open up the paths for the victorious life Christ offers Believers.

ROBIN M BERTRAM, Executive Produce Freedom Today TV, Christian Women in Media National Regions Director

In the first book in her *Faith to Live By* series, Pamela Christian teaches the importance of having an ‘examined faith’, something that I advocate on a daily basis. In book two of the series, *Renew Your Hope!* Pamela builds upon that foundation and demonstrates how we can have an *effective faith*—a faith that gives us hope in the One in whom that faith is deservedly placed. With a correct understanding of biblical faith sadly lacking, not only in today’s secular culture but also within Christianity itself, *Renew Your Hope!* is a much needed refresher course in not just what it means to have faith, but in putting that faith into practice as well.

GREG WEST, Founder and editor of The Poached Egg Christian Worldview and Apologetics Network National Staff Member at Ratio Christ Student Apologetics Alliance

After reading Pamela Christian’s first book *Examine Your Faith, Finding Truth in a World of Lies*, I was really impressed with how gifted she is in communicating somewhat scholarly information so the average person can understand and personally relate. She has carried forward this same gift in her new book, *Renew Your Hope, Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs*. The book is educational, but also compellingly transformational. As she shares her story about her faith-walk, we get the opportunity to absorb her experiences for our own personal application and benefit to our lives. All points are grounded in God’s Word. I thank Pam for taking the time to research and write this book. My faith is strengthened along with my appreciation for our Sovereign God.

RON HENRY, President, The Sterling Group, and Area Director for Fellowship of Companies for Christ International

"The secret to receiving answers to prayer is satisfying the conditions, which is not difficult. We are simply required to become disciples of Jesus and learn His ways. We can do nothing. What's important is that we *become*." I love this quote from Pamela's book. We think so often that we have to find the right formula, scour the Scriptures to see what we're missing and when we do everything just right God will answer our prayers. We should be searching Scripture all the time because there is a never ending living message to us but the purpose isn't to see a hidden formula. The purpose is to become more like Jesus. As we get more and more familiar with how He lived and reacted to the challenges of life, we are able to react to our great challenges with our new natures, becoming more and more like Him. This is our hope in Christ.

LINDY BOONE MICHAELIS, Author of *Heaven Hears*

Pamela Christian connected with me from the very beginning. I really like the fact that she is empathetic. Her personal stories and those from others are not the confessions of glass-bubble saints who know nothing of tragedy or pain. The stories are real and they simply move the heart to a higher plane. Whatever you've experienced personally, there is a story in *Renew Your Hope* that will usher in the healing. This alone would make the book worthy of your attention; however, Pamela has a wonderful ability to encourage her reader. I kept waiting for the hammer to drop where I felt unworthy or guilty or just not good enough. That didn't happen. Not only does she believe that you can do all things through Christ, she will show you how. So if you're not already sold, let me add one more incentive. Pamela understands why most Christians struggle in their faith, and it's not for all the reasons that one might assume. Most people haven't begun to understand who they are in Christ Jesus: Saints who have been washed clean, children of the most high God, over-comers by the power of the resurrection, faith warriors who are more than conquerors. Pamela understands the identity crisis handicapping many believers today. The gift she brings to this discussion is her ability to help you really live as Christ has already promised you can—yoke-free and victorious.

R. JAMES SHUPP, Th.M., M.Div., Lead Pastor, Movement Church, San Antonio, Texas and Author of *Who Killed My Church?*

RENEW YOUR HOPE!

REMEDY FOR PERSONAL
BREAKTHROUGHS

Pamela Christian



Renew Your Hope!

Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs

Book Two in the *Faith to Live By* book series.

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Pamela Christian's books may be ordered through booksellers or by contacting:

Pamela Christian Ministries
18032 Lemon Drive #C206
Yorba Linda, CA 92886
www.pamelachristianministries.com

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info@protocolpublishing.com

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“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works,
which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Ephesians 2:10

There is no one other than our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, to whom this book, entire book series, and ministry work I am able to do, should be dedicated. May my words bring glory and honor to Him, and a great blessing and benefit to each one who benefits from these ministries. Amen.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

N*o man is an Island.* One person's work is a compilation of efforts from those who've gone before from the beginning of all time and Creation. We collectively glean what is necessary for us from that compilation. Because of this history, I find impossible the task of properly acknowledging everyone who has had a part in this or other ministry projects of mine. The best way I know how is to thank God openly with my words and my life—to become as the Apostle Paul encourages, a living sacrifice for Christ. May I do this more and more each day of my life on earth, for the glory of God, and the benefit of others.

This, the second book in my *Faith to Live By* series, has been as enjoyable to research and write as the first. I fully expect the entire project to be a work of joy for all of us. *Us* refers to several individuals to whom I am indebted and have come to love and highly esteem.

Dan Story is a mentor and encourager who has seen my unedited manuscripts in the most woeful condition, yet he believed in me. His ability to see a *diamond in the rough* is something for which I am eternally grateful.

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My husband, David, has consistently paved a way for me to have the freedom and flexibility to do the work God has called me to do.

I also wish to acknowledge the many men and women whose work preceded me. Their efforts have allowed me to study and grow with the goal of sharing the life-giving truths I've been blessed to find thus far, and expect to continue to discover.

INTRODUCTION

Life has a way of beating us down and eroding our optimism. None of us escape hardships in life. Whether we experience intermittent seasons of adversity and recovery or a long haul of difficulties with little to no reprieve, each of us fights the battle of holding out for hope at one point or another. For most of us, finding hope is especially difficult when we endure troubles that come to us through no fault of our own. The tragic death of a loved one, the destruction of a marriage, the unexpected loss of income, and serious health issues—these are some adversities that I have personally suffered. And if you experience a long term of adversity like I have, much more than your hope suffers—so does your faith.

I've written *Renew Your Hope! Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs* with profound compassion and understanding from personal experiences—mine along with those of others who have allowed me to tell their stories. We try to share our real and raw responses experienced during our times of suffering to encourage you. We know the kinds of worries, fears, and doubts that can erode our faith and extinguish our hope. But we've learned what is required to combat the negative thoughts and feelings, to breakthrough our circumstances into victory. We share the intentional, deliberate effort that we can and *must* take if we want to experience the hope and personal breakthroughs that God wants us to have.

Hebrews 11:6 is the focus verse for this *Faith to Live By* book series. The verse reveals a promise of God that we can expect to enjoy in this life if we meet the condition of the promise. “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who diligently seek Him.”¹ What we believe directly influences our hope. Faith is the fundamental element of

hope. Because of the faith/hope relationship, the first book in the series is *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*. That book provides what you need to have *essential faith*—that is, faith that allows you to be rightly related with the One True God—the same faith that satisfies the condition of the promise of Hebrews 11:6. If you have not confidently concluded that Christianity is the only faith that leads to the One True God, I respectfully ask you to read the first book in this series. If you are not a Believer, you will gain little from what you read here.

The message in this second book is how to have *effective faith*—faith that allows us to overcome our circumstances and experience personal breakthroughs—the victory *Christ* offers. (Christ is the Greek word for *anointed* often used to refer to the *Anointed One*, specifically Jesus.) Effective faith is a matter of deeply comprehending God’s truth, then practicing what we have learned. However, and very sadly, the majority of people who profess the Christian faith aren’t doing this—they don’t know how to embrace such faith and, as a result, they struggle with hopelessness.

God does not want us to live hopeless, defeated lives. That’s the very reason He personally, and at great cost, provided a way of escape. You not only have God’s promises for a hope-filled life, you have His assurance—His guarantee. But unless you believe in God *and* know how to appropriate His promises, you can be unnecessarily subjected to defeat.

Of the estimated seventy-five percent of Americans who profess to be Christian, one-third are referred to as *Cultural Christians*—they are Christians in name sake only, without a vibrant faith. Another one-third are categorized as *Congregational Christians* who have some ties to a home church, but who do not practice the Christian faith in their daily lives. These statistics mean that roughly *sixty-six percent* of all who profess the Christian faith don’t fully operate in the victory and joy Jesus died to provide *Christian Believers* in this earthly life!² These statistics show there are

a lot of people who need to have their hope renewed!

I've known rejection and despair. I've seen the ravages that alcoholism and addictions have on individuals and families. I've suffered serious financial trials and major life and death health issues. I've fought depression daily as the adversities of life all but consumed me. But I have found what you and many others are seeking. Hope! Personal breakthroughs are available *if* we truly want them. *If we want them* may seem like a strange condition. You may wonder, *why wouldn't a person want breakthroughs?* Let me explain.

I've known many people who, on a subconscious level, have become so familiar with their burdens, so identified with the life they've always known, that the prospect of a breakthrough is not on their radar. They have become so resigned to their personal situation that they have no hope for anything different. Many people remain in a perpetual state of hopelessness simply because living without hope is familiar to them. For these people, the effort required to make any change is not something they are willing to do.

Finding hope and overcoming tragedies begins with an act of one's will. No doubt this is why Jesus asked the man at the pool of Bethesda, who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years, "Do you want to be healed?"³

The man's response reveals he'd wanted to be healed for a long time, but felt no hope that he could be made whole. He explained that he had no one to help him, that by the time he could reach the healing waters, another person stepped in before him. Can you relate? Have you been trying to find the answers you need, but always come up short? Have you been dealing with a matter for so very long that you are nearly without hope?

The man at the pool of Bethesda believed he could only be healed if he were the first person to enter the healing waters. Imagine how unbelievable the situation must have seemed to him when Jesus, a stranger to him,

simply stated, “Get up, take up your bed and walk.”⁴ He probably had thoughts run through his mind along the lines of, *are you nuts? Can’t you see my condition? How do you expect me to get up, let alone walk?*

If Jesus were to ask you something totally unexpected with the promise that your hope would be fulfilled and your breakthrough finally realized, would you be willing to take a step of faith? Are you willing to reconsider the paths or lessons or methods you’ve been taught to follow, with the prospect of finding new direction and new hope that leads to your needed breakthroughs?

I am a fellow struggler with a heart of compassion, and I want to share what I have learned to help you discover the victorious life available through faith in Jesus. You can gain new hope. You can have personal breakthroughs. I am not saying that there is a formula or a specific recipe or a particular program to follow that will produce the results you want. But there are principles and conditions that you can learn, and actions you can take, to help you experience all God’s promised benefits.

Renewing your hope and embracing the remedy for personal breakthroughs begins and ends with faith. Not the so-called popularized faith that claims we can have whatever we want if we have enough faith. That teaching, sadly, is unbiblical and has prevented many people from discovering the true and genuine hope that is available, in abundance, through faith!

Recognizing that our hope is empowered by our conviction of faith, and that our faith is directly affected by what we believe to be truth, my work is devoted to helping you ascertain matters of truth. Hope and faith are interrelated and both can direct us to the prospect of experiencing a positive outcome. However, only when we are utterly convinced of the truth can we persevere unto breakthroughs.

The Christian faith, when genuinely embraced, makes a person

completely new—radically transformed from the inside out. Moreover, as Christian Believers grow in their faith, they have access to the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is given to guide and empower every Believer to transform their lives and even the world around them. *Renew Your Hope! Remedy for Personal Breakthroughs* is written to help you learn how to apply your Christian faith. To live that faith in such a way that you can experience every bit of the abundant life—the mountain-moving faith—of which Jesus spoke.

As difficult as experiencing a joy-filled victorious life in this fallen world may be, Christ said we can, so I don't want to settle for less. Neither should you.

What are you seeking God for in your life? What breakthroughs do you earnestly need? Have you been suffering for a long time under the same burdens so that you've become wearied, even in your faith? Jesus not only had much to say about faith, He demonstrated a faith that produced more miracles than the Bible could record. The Apostle John, who was among the first twelve of Jesus' followers wrote, "Now there are also many other things that Jesus did. Were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written."⁵

Jesus' disciples performed many miracles once they learned how to apply faith as Jesus taught them. In John 14:12-14, Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it."⁶

Now can be your time to be restored to the fullness of God's promises of transformation and hope, which Christ suffered and died to provide you. You truly can renew your hope and discover remedies for personal breakthroughs! If you're ready to explore this truth, simply turn the page.

PART ONE

CONDITIONS OF FAITH

God's love is unconditional, but His promises aren't. There are conditions of faith that we must meet before we can lay any claim to God's promises. To prepare you to discover the hope you desire, and to experience the personal breakthroughs you need, take time to fully grasp the foundational concepts found in Part One of this book.

CHAPTER ONE

Faith Personified

Christ is Our Hope

What I've learned in my decades of life is that when we are up against hardships, we are in the perfect position for God to miraculously intervene in our lives. While God can and does work in our life when we are not suffering, we feel him doing so most intensely when we *are* suffering.

This book is written from the perspective that not only does God exist, He is a miracle-working God, actively involved in the real-world circumstances of people, especially those who invite Him to participate in their lives. I realize that not everyone believes this. Not everyone desires His involvement because they don't want to be subject to God—they want to be god or lord of their own lives. Additionally, many people, even some who believe in God, don't believe that the miraculous gifts described in the Christian Bible are available today. Still, I don't know of anyone who would refuse a miracle that made their life better. Do you?

Maybe you're one who struggles with the existence, nature, and involvement of God in the world today. When you come up against hardships that reveal the full extent of your human limitations, don't you secretly wish that some way, some how, you could get the help you need?

If so, I ask you to maintain an open mind as you read this book. You will learn important principles from the Bible and from real life testimonies—some from Scriptures, some my own, and some from people I know.

Hope's Prerequisite is Faith

Hope springs eternal is an oft-used phrase in poems, music, books, philosophical discussions, and more. But anyone who has lived much life on earth will admit, in honesty, that there are times we feel devoid of hope. These are the occasions when we can see absolutely no way our hope can be fulfilled. For hope to spring at all, let alone eternally, requires faith. Faith and hope are gifts from God. When we lack faith or hope, we have not properly *understood, acknowledged, believed, and received*. Consider the following word-picture.

I have in my hand a very large and beautifully-wrapped gift that I am elated to give you. I think I'm even more excited about giving the gift to you than you will be to receive the present. Yet I know what is inside the package is something you want and need and will be ecstatic to have. I set the gift directly in front of you easily within your reach. And I'm so giddy that before you ever reach out to receive and open my present, I blurt out what's inside! But you don't respond. You don't even blink. My gift freely given to you from my heart is directly in front of you. The gift is completely yours for the taking, but you don't seem to realize that I and my gift even exist. Or if you know I exist, you don't know enough about me to accept what I'm offering. That's the problem.

Unless you believe that I exist, and that I have the ability to give you such a glorious gift, you will not even consider receiving the present. The gift is something you have greatly needed and for which you've longed. The only way you can reach out and embrace the gift I have for you is if you

have faith in me—that I am real and am able to benefit you personally.

Hebrews 11:6 reads, “And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists, and that he rewards those who diligently seek Him.”¹

Unless you believe, you will not receive—you will not receive faith or hope or anything else from God unless you believe and then, by faith, act on that belief to receive.

Assuming you are a skeptic, or a person whose hope and faith are dim, I offer you real and certain hope, provided you believe in God through faith in Jesus. If you have not settled this belief and faith in *Christ*, (the Greek title given Jesus that means Anointed One), the pages of this chapter may help you to do so. If you have settled your faith in Christ for salvation, but have difficulty believing Him for the breakthroughs you need, keep reading. The same process for acquiring *essential faith* (saving faith) applies for receiving *effective faith*, (demonstrated faith). Four simple steps in the following order comprise the process:

1. Understanding – to learn and gain knowledge/vision.
2. Accepting – to personally acknowledge as truth.
3. Believing – to stand, rely upon, trust, and expect.
4. Receiving – to personally obtain.

With such a simple process, why aren't more people embracing the many breakthroughs God wants for us? Because in our human reasoning, we often make what is simple amazingly difficult.

Understanding, Accepting, and Believing Christ

As God intended, within the Christian faith is power to overcome the evil of this world. Through faith in Jesus, also referred to as Christ, any human

being can have hope. God wants you to be filled with hope and to see your hopes fulfilled—so much so that He made hope abundantly possible through faith in Christ.

I didn't know Christ until I was nearly thirty years old. Oh, I knew about Him, at least in part. My parents allowed me to attend church with our neighbors when I was young. I recall the Sunday school teacher telling me about Jesus and how He could be my forever friend. She explained that Jesus could save me from my sin and keep me from going to Hell, which she made clear was a very terrible place. At the tender young age of about five, I didn't exactly know what sin was, but I knew what a terrible place was. The violence, alcoholism, and abuse in my home had taught me that much. In response, I did what the Sunday school teacher suggested and prayed to ask Jesus to be my Forever Friend. I didn't fully understand what I was doing, and without any reinforcing instruction from my parents or other influencers in my life, I lived my life like many people today. I knew something about Jesus, but I didn't give Him or the Christian faith much consideration, though I believed I was a Christian and entitled to all the benefits of the faith.

Not until I was nearly thirty years old, when my entire life fell apart and everything I believed came crashing down, did I ever seriously consider Jesus again. The man I thought I would marry, and with whom I hoped I would spend the rest of my life, broke off our relationship, which literally broke me.

I recall the night, that dark painful night when I sat alone in my condominium. Hot tears streamed down my face uncontrollably while sobs from the depth of my being—a depth I'd never experienced before—consumed me. My thoughts drifted back to the Sunday school teacher's assurance that Jesus could help me. I found myself praying aloud, "Jesus, God, Heavenly Father," I really wasn't sure how to address Him. "If You

are everything the Sunday school teacher said You are, if You are a loving and caring God who can help me with my life, then I need You now more than ever. I know I've lived my life on my own. I've lived as lord of my own life. But I'm willing for You to be Lord of my life if You can take my life and make something good of it. I now realize I need to be saved from much more than Hell. I need to be saved from the mess I've made of my life.”

Although I had just a little understanding about Jesus and God, with uncertain hopefulness that God is as the Sunday school teacher explained, God responded to me immediately. Right there. Right then. In the midst of the greatest pain I'd ever known, I found real and certain Hope. God answered my prayer and I was instantly transformed. I didn't understand what had happened, but I knew the experience was real. God is real. Jesus is real. Hope is available, not only for me, but for you. In fact, hope is available for anyone who wants to embrace what is offered through faith in Christ.

Sadly, very few people know this or believe this. Many don't want the hope that Jesus offers because of wrong understanding—because they are deceived. Many people have a wholly incorrect understanding of God, Jesus, the Bible, and Christianity.

With these precious people in mind, perhaps including you, I devote my life to helping people discover and live in life-giving truth. Hope is available. Real and confident hope exists. Hope begins with personal *salvation*, which is to be restored into a right relationship with *God the Father*, through faith in *Jesus the Son*, by the power of the *Holy Spirit*. The Christian God is a *Triune God*—that is, He is one God who eternally exists as three persons. This God is the God and Creator of all that exists.

As the Creator of all that exists, God wants you to enjoy a victorious hope-filled life, able to overcome any adversities you encounter.

Biblical Understanding of a Victorious Life

God originally fashioned humanity in His image, fully-empowered to wield His imparted-authority over the earth and all that the earth contained. However, the first man and woman, deceived by the enemy of God, rejected God's authority. In so doing they rejected all that was good and *holy* and embraced all that is wicked and evil. Holy means to be dedicated or consecrated or set apart unto God.

But God's love for each individual descended from the first man and woman is so great that even though His authority had been rejected outright, He revealed a plan of redemption for all mankind. The moment the first man, Adam, and the first woman, Eve, admitted their *sin*—their rejection of God and all that was good—God cursed the enemy known as *Satan*. Then He explained the future difficulties Adam and Eve had brought into all Creation, and to all their descendents. Moved by His great love, God began to reveal His plan to redeem humanity from the ravages of sin, restoring to those who choose God, victory over evil—hope in place of despair.²

Evil entered into our world as a result of the first man and first woman's rejection of God's authority. However, *Believers*—those who place their faith in Jesus the Christ—can subdue evil and overcome many of the ravages and sufferings that exist on earth. Through Christ's imputed authority they have hope.

A victorious life on earth is not one that is devoid of all pain, sickness, disease, and suffering—that's life in heaven. A victorious life on earth is one that intentionally seeks God the Father's direction in order to do His will on earth. His will is revealed in His *Written Word*, the Bible, and in Jesus, referred to as God's *Living Word*. His will includes overcoming all sorts of evil, disease, pain, and suffering for the benefit of humanity while

bringing glory to God. His will is entirely motivated by His character, which is love—supreme love from which all good originates according to 1 John 4:8. God revealed His love in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus is the One who proclaimed: “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. *In the world you will have tribulation.* But take heart; I have overcome the world.”³ [Emphasis added] If there is any limitation in securing all that God offers—the abundant life that Christ died to provide—the cause is our limited thinking and understanding. Recall that *understanding* is the first step in the process of receiving.

God’s View of Abundant Victorious Life

In John 10:10, Jesus is quoted: “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”⁴ The Greek word used for *abundantly* in that passage is *perisson*, which carries the additional meanings of special, unusual, superabundant ... overflowing, over and above a certain quantity, a quantity so abundant as to be considerably more than what one would expect or anticipate.⁵

1 Corinthians 2:9 paraphrases the Old Testament passage from Isaiah 64:4. We read, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.”⁶ The Apostle Paul informs us that God “...is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”⁷ (Ephesians 3:20) Clearly God desires us to have abundant life.

First, the life God offers is eternal *relationship* with Him. We read in John 17:3 Jesus’ words, “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”⁸ To personally know God is the greatest privilege we can have. While those who know God have authority and power in Jesus’ name, which is wonderful, our greatest joy is to be that our “names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:19-20)⁹

Second, life is given to us by way of *regeneration* (explained more fully later in this chapter). In our natural-born physical condition we are enemies of God. Only when a person willfully chooses to believe in and receive Jesus as Savior and Lord is their spirit within them born-again—regenerated from death to life. Knowing God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ *is* life, and life abundant. While regeneration is most assuredly glorious enough, there is more!

Our eternal lives of faith in Christ begin the day we say *yes* to Jesus. From that moment on we are no longer our own as we've been bought with the very blood of Jesus.¹⁰ Romans 8:32 reveals how God has demonstrated His love for us: “He [God] who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he [God] not also with him [Son] graciously give us all things?”¹¹ With faith in Christ we are adopted into the family of God and made joint heirs with Jesus, meaning that we share in all that belongs to Him.

By definition, a victorious life is one that overcomes opposition. If there is no opposition, there is nothing over which to have victory. With faith in Christ, and by partnering with God and His Holy Spirit who resides in Believers, we are transformed and we work with God in His plan. God's view of life abundant is not a life that never suffers. Abundant life is one that gains victory by going through the suffering of this world and being greatly improved by the process. In fact, *according to the degree that we partner with God*, we will realize victory, or not.

We were created by God with works of service in mind. We are each given spiritual gifts and natural talents in order to succeed in the unique purpose for our life. We can know God's perfect plan and purpose for ourselves, if we seek Him. God intends that we seek Him first, then all things will be added unto us, as promised in Matthew 6:25-34. When we submit to God and discover and live our God-intended purpose, even with

opposition, we find true personal fulfillment. Nothing can operate optimally when used contrary to the created design. Therefore, we serve ourselves best to seek God and His planned purpose for our lives.

God knows our wants and desires—He knows our hearts. He knows the struggle suffered in lack and the relief enjoyed in plenty. What is considered abundant to one person, would not be abundant to another. God’s love and interaction with each of us is distinct according to our uniquely individual situations and His plan for our lives.

The Abundance of the Heart Influences our Life

French Philosopher, Blaise Pascal, (1623-1662) is accredited the quote, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every man which cannot be filled by any created thing, but only by God, the Creator, made known through Jesus.¹²

Humans are not only created with a heart-need to know God, but are made in God’s image. Scriptures reveal that God is three Persons in One: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Being made in God’s image, we are created in three-parts: body; soul, and spirit. The human soul and spirit are eternal, whereas the body is temporal. Specific to the heart of man, which refers to the soul and spirit, the Bible has much to say.

The word heart as used in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word *leb*, which means much more than the seat of human emotion or the physical heart organ. Heart means the unique essence of the individual soul (mind/intellect/will, heart/emotions, and distinct personality). When we place our faith in Christ, our eternal spirit is instantly made holy—transformed into an entirely new being that never before existed. Our body and soul however remain unchanged until we willingly cooperate with the Holy Spirit to transform us. We have an active and willful participation in

the transforming of our *leb* and body. Based on Jeremiah 17:9-10, we should want to do the work: “The heart [*leb*] is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the LORD search the heart [*leb*] and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.”¹³

As physical beings, we are naturally-oriented toward material things. But as Believers, our focus must first be on God. “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.¹⁴ (Colossians 3:2-3) In Matthew 6:19-20, we read the words of Jesus: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.”¹⁵ Also in Matthew:

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ... Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.¹⁶

Jeremiah 9:23-24 provides us with a bold and comforting statement from God:

Thus says the LORD: Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and

righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight,
declares the LORD.¹⁷

When we learn to abide in Christ—when we live from our regenerated spirit instead of our natural inclinations—we experience the abundant life. Abundant life begins and ends with knowing God. J.I. Packer, author of the best-selling book *Knowing God*, wrote, “What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something which catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance, and this the Christian has in a way that no other person has. For what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?”¹⁸ Knowing God, in the sense of the Hebrew word, *yada*, is to have a personal, experiential knowledge of Him.¹⁹ Having a personal relationship with God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, *this* is abundant life. And from this new platform, we can express God’s love and power in ways that overcome natural circumstances and transform us more into the image of Christ.

The War of Good and Evil

Our world is at war and hungry for hope. You and I and every human being ever born are born into this war. The war is strategically-waged against humanity in an all out effort to prevent us from finding any measure of hope. And because of the numerous battles that have been won against humanity, many are on the verge of, or in, complete despair. What people don’t realize is that Christ *is* our Hope. There is no other. The historical person named Jesus, known as Christ, is our only hope. However, through all time and history, people have sought to find other solutions out of hearts that reject God. Additionally, the war is so intense that even Christians—those who have discovered the hope of Christ—can

unwittingly reject some of the promises of God and as a result feel hopeless or unfulfilled in their faith.

Many people reject God and His promises out of ignorance or deception. They don't know the realities concerning Jesus, and in turn they don't know the truth about God. From nearly the beginning of the human race, war has been declared against truth, in an effort by the enemy of God to prevent people from knowing God. And unless we properly know God—His nature and His character, will, and intentions for us—we cannot expect to find any hope.

Conditions for Effective Faith

There are several testimonies recorded herein to encourage you in your faith and to provide you with some very specific guidelines to follow when you are contending for God's intervention. Each situation is different, but there are some basic conditions that need to be satisfied in every instance in order for God to be willing to act. God will never act against the human will. He will not force Himself upon anyone. If you choose Him, you get Him, and all His promised benefits are available to you. If you don't, you don't. It's that simple.

If you have a need for something in your life that you cannot produce—if you need God to intervene in your life (and I assume you do or that that you will)—then you need to make certain you have satisfied the conditions that make His work on your behalf possible. Following is the first condition that must be satisfied.

Who Do You Say Jesus Is?

When deciding on religious faith, the one question that has resonated with humanity for over two thousand years was asked by Jesus. Addressing Peter, one of His first twelve disciples, Jesus asked, “But who do you say I am?”²⁰ By His very existence, Jesus poses the same question to every individual. Are you prepared to answer that question for yourself?

Throughout the centuries, few deny the historical reality of a significantly influential man named Jesus. Many, however, deny Who He claimed to be. Contemplating how much controversy there is over one Man Who, earthly speaking, came from very humble beginnings, had no educational degree, and a far from impressive occupation is interesting. Just His name alone causes some people to declare personal offense. The symbol for Jesus’ life, the cross, is the subject of many lawsuits by those who don’t want to allow *even a symbolic reference* to this man in public places. They attempt to deny, disregard, and wipe out over two thousands of years of *historical faith*, held by hundreds of millions of individuals: faith based on solid, objective, and verifiable evidence.

Those in the Old Testament era who believed in the coming of God’s promised Redeemer/Deliverer and those in the New Testament era who look back and believe on the historical Redeemer/Deliverer named Jesus, share the same *faith conviction*. Anyone who places their faith in the promised Redeemer/Deliverer is spiritually transformed from being an enemy of God to being a member of God’s family. This change is a super-natural spiritual transformation. Unless our faith is in Christ, we can have no hope. Let me explain.

Nicodemus was a Jewish religious leader who lived in the days of Jesus. In the Gospel according to John, we learn that Nicodemus sought Jesus *in the night* to inquire of Him. Jesus’ response to Nicodemus was as follows,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Understandably Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.²¹

Having difficulty understanding what Jesus meant Nicodemus inquired further. Jesus replied:

Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to

condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.²²

Early in Jesus' ministry, He boldly claimed to be the promised Redeemer/Deliverer—far more than simply a good teacher as Nicodemus first thought.

Jesus' favorite reference to Himself was *Son of Man*, as you read in the above verse. This was His favorite reference because of His appointed mission as the promised Redeemer/Deliverer for humanity and because of his unique physical conception, explored later in this chapter.

Also in the above passage, Jesus' use of the pronouns, *We* and *Our*, reveals His claim to personhood with the *Triune God*. The study of the Triune God, or the *Trinity*, is fascinating. Beginning with the first book of the Old Testament, God reveals Himself—His nature—as three persons in One. Each is co-existent, co-eternal, and equal in power but with each emphasizing a different role. For now our focus is on God the Son, namely Jesus.

No other person in history has caused as much profound commotion as this man named Jesus. However, once you understand who He not only claimed, but proved Himself to be, you either love Him or hate Him. Those

who are indifferent are those who don't properly understand the factual, historical life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. What about you? Do you love Him? Do you hate Him? Are you indifferent?

Consider that whether you love Him or hate Him, you believe in Him. After all, what logic is there in hating someone or something that you don't believe exists? What logic would there be to have *any emotion whatsoever* toward someone or something you don't believe exists?

Generally speaking, people don't deny the existence of a historical man Who was born as early as 4 BC and Who died as late as AD 36, named Jesus. What they seek to deny is Who He claimed to be. Clearly He claimed to be our Hope.

Understanding the History of the War

Before creating the universe, God created spiritual beings known as angels who operate under His authority.²³ God gave all His created beings *free-will*—decision-making capabilities. Free-will allows God's created beings to have complete control over the decision to worship God or not. God does not impose Himself or His ways on anyone.

Scriptures reveal the names of some of the angels. One angel is named Lucifer. We have limited knowledge of him. Scriptures reveal he was an archangel, perhaps one of the highest ranking. From the prophet Isaiah we know that this angel rebelled against God. “You said in your heart, *I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.*”²⁴

We don't know why this angel, also known as Satan, sacrificed his high-ranking position to fight his Master. Charles H. Kraft, author of *I Give You Authority: Practicing the Authority Jesus Gave Us*, has a theory:

Perhaps the thing that tipped him [Lucifer] in the direction [to rebel] was the rumor that God planned to create a new being, one that would carry God's own image, who would therefore displace Lucifer as second in authority over the universe. My theory is that this plan of God angered him beyond his ability to remain obedient to God, so he rebelled and set up his own kingdom.²⁵

Through an act of his free-will, Lucifer became an enemy of God. We learn from Scriptures that he influenced a great number of heavenly hosts to join him. We don't know just how much authority and power as an archangel Lucifer was able to maintain in his rebellion. Regardless, he seems to have enough to disrupt the plans of God and His creatures. "This situation," as Kraft puts it, "has resulted in one of the great ironies of history—a being who uses the very power God allows him to oppose the God who gave it to him [in the first place]. But this irony is paralleled by another: the fact that God has done the same thing with humans. God has set certain limitations upon Himself by giving to humans and apparently angels, a certain amount of autonomy [through free-will] that we can use, if we choose, even to oppose the One who gives it to us."²⁶

Scriptures reveal that Lucifer wasn't satisfied with seeking to establish his own kingdom. He is bent on destroying all that is important to God. This desire is rooted in pride—a penchant for self-importance and an unwillingness to submit to any authority except one's own.

Modern Day Rejection of God

Pride is the root-cause for humanity's continued rejection of God to this day. You may say, "But I believe in God. I am a Christian!" Perhaps you are

among those who are identified as Cultural or Congregational Christians. You acknowledge that God exists, have perhaps even received Jesus as your Savior, but you do not submit your life to Him and His ways—you do not acknowledge Jesus as Lord. If you have remained lord of your life, then you merely know about Jesus—you have not placed your trust in Him. Scripture refers to such ideology as having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof.²⁷ And as I already shared, I attempted to live the first thirty years of my life in that manner.

For Adam and Eve, just as God had forewarned, rejection of His authority resulted in spiritual death, separating them from God and all that was good. Their choice led to sin, sickness, suffering, death, and evil entering into our world. Rejection of God is called sin. Sin never impacts just one person, but always impacts all the world.

Because Adam and Eve are the human father and mother of all humanity, every human born after them has *inherited* the same spiritually-dead condition. We are each born dead in sin—our spirit is dead. We are born enemies of God. We are born sinners capable of nothing good, in and of ourselves. Note that we are not considered sinners because we commit acts of sin. Rather we commit acts of sin because of our natural-born, inherited sin-nature. We cannot help ourselves, which is precisely why God promised, then fulfilled His promise to send us a Redeemer.

Jesus, the Promised Redeemer

God miraculously fulfilled His promise through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In God's wisdom, He chose the specific family line for Jesus—the lineage of King David. To a young virgin woman named Mary, God sent the angel Gabriel who proclaimed;

Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with

God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.²⁸

As she was a virgin, his words greatly perplexed Mary. She asked the angel Gabriel how this could be. The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.”²⁹

To help our understanding, consider that the Holy Spirit of God miraculously caused Mary to become pregnant without sexual intercourse. In this way Jesus was conceived both fully human and fully God. In our quest to learn how to apply effective faith and to experience the hope Christ offers, we must understand that He operated primarily in His humanity while on earth. He intentionally subjected His human body and soul to the Father’s will. “...who, though he [Jesus] was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:6-8)

Jesus was fully human, and without relying on His divinity, He lived in His humanity, utterly reliant on His Spiritual relationship with God the Father, and lived a sinless life. He thereby became the One who could pay the debt of sin that we owe, but cannot pay because of our sin-nature. The Bible tells us that He was tempted in every way that sin is known to man, yet He did not sin. This unique purity of human existence, through willful

reliance on God the Father, allowed Him to be the one suitable Sacrifice to redeem all of humanity.

We learn from reading 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he [God the Father] made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.” Jesus took on the sins of the world so that anyone who believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. His sinless life, lived out entirely in His humanity, was offered up as the supreme sacrifice. His tortured, body was put to death, death by crucifixion, then He was buried in a tomb. But three days later—as foretold by the Old Testament prophet Hosea, as referenced in the Old Testament by Jonah and as prophesied by Jesus Himself,³⁰—by the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was bodily resurrected. Jesus’ resurrection is the final act of His earthly mission and the fulfillment of God’s promise to send a Redeemer. From this victory over sin, sickness, disease, and death all who believe and receive Jesus as Savior and Lord are given a new spirit, a new heart, and an opportunity for a new mind. In time we will also inherit our new bodies in Christ.³¹ Jesus is the personification of God’s promise. Through faith in Him, we are given the ability to overcome the sin of this world, and to enjoy the abundant, victorious life Christ offers.

Simply through faith in Jesus dying in our place, as the *Sacrificial Lamb of God* who fully paid the debt of sin for all who will believe and receive Him, we are restored to a full, pure relationship with God the Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through faith in Jesus being Who He claimed to be, God offers a spiritually born-again new life—an utterly transformed spirit to anyone who chooses to believe in and receive Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. Jesus was conveying these truths to Nicodemus. A spiritual birth is needed to restore us to God the Father, through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Not everyone will make this choice to be restored to God through faith

in Christ. But understand, God never had the intention that man would be separated from Him and all that's good. God's preference for mankind was and is the perfect and holy world He created and the same eternal communion He intended for Adam and Eve. God still offers these things to anyone who will believe Him for His Word—His promises.

By Faith We Are New Creatures Capable of New Feats

Those who place their faith in Jesus Christ are made into utterly new creatures—spiritually-regenerated human beings that never existed before. We are fully made new creations in Christ! 2 Corinthians 5:17 reads, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” This should give you tremendously overwhelming joy! With faith in Christ, your old sinful nature, with all its shame, guilt, bondage, and enmity with God, has been destroyed and no longer exists. Moreover, your nature's been replaced with an utterly newly-born creation! This means that personal salvation provides us a new spirit allowing us to work with God to transform our mind, soul, and even our body in Christ!

As amazing as our new spirit being is, very sadly, personal salvation and confidence of eternal life in heaven is where the celebration stops for most Christians. Why? Because they have been deceived about God's motives—His plan, will, and intentions for them. They see God's “dos and don'ts” for living as restrictive, antiquated—no longer relevant. They prefer instead to live a life of their own choosing, within their own power and abilities. But when we understand the depths of God's love for us, and that His “dos and don'ts” are for our own protection and good, the only rational response is to unabashedly embrace Him and all His ways. He loves us, He created us, and He knows what is best for us. It's foolish not to embrace Him.

What Does Christ Mean to You?

If at this point you realize you have never fully understood the Christian faith and all that faith offers, is there any reason you can't embrace Him now? Jesus died to give you the opportunity to be rightly-related to God the Father through faith in Who Jesus claimed and demonstrated Himself to be. But more, He also died to give you the power to overcome the sin of this world—to live the abundant, victorious life He exemplified and taught His disciples to live.

Jesus' first twelve disciples were simple, ordinary men. They didn't have prominent positions in society. They weren't highly educated. Neither were they wealthy. But they found so much more than these earthly things through embracing Jesus as their Savior and Lord. They found hope in Christ that allowed them to enjoy peace and security in both times of plenty and in times of need. As a result of their faith in Christ, they lived and worked by the same power Christ prayerfully called upon through communion with God the Father. With hearts lined up with the Father and His plans and purposes, they fully embraced their new spiritual being. They learned how to cause the soul and body and the physical world to come under subjection to the power of Christ, through the Holy Spirit. They learned how and when to perform miracles, signs, and wonders for the benefit of people and the glory of God.

Christ still offers us the hope and the power to live victoriously in this life and into the life to come. If you want to be restored into a right relationship with God the Father, through faith in Christ, all you need to do is believe in Jesus for Who He is, and by believing, receive the Holy Spirit. Romans 10:8-13 reads:

The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart
(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); because, if you

confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for 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.”³²

A word of caution: many have sought to merely receive the power or gifts of God without desiring a personal relationship with Him. As stated earlier, I wanted Jesus to be my Savior to keep me from hell in my eternal life. But I wanted to remain lord of my temporal life. That is, until I made such a hopeless mess of my life that I needed someone greater than myself to save me. I share from experience: no one can have the power or enjoy the victory and promises of God without genuinely desiring a personal relationship with Him through faith in Christ.

Your first step in renewing your hope is to enter into a genuine personal relationship with God the Father, through faith in Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. If at this point you sense you earnestly desire this in a way you never have before, then simply proclaim your faith in Christ right where you are. You can pray this simple prayer, *Father God, I thank you for opening the eyes of understanding in my heart. Today, as never before, I believe in Jesus as the Son of God, whose personal sacrifice opened the way for me to be restored into a right relationship with You. I choose to receive Jesus as my personal Lord, so I can begin to walk in Your ways in this life. I thank You for this eternal Hope, and eagerly look forward to what You will do for me and through me, for Your glory and the benefit of many. Amen.*

If you prayed that prayer, take the time now to reflect on the meaning. Bask in God's pleasure with you. You have exchanged your naturally-born sinful condition for a supernaturally-born sinless condition. Your spirit has been made entirely new! I celebrate with all of heaven that your name is written in the *Lamb's Book of Life*. I pray you learn to effectively work out your new found faith into the abundant, victorious life Christ died to give you, and may this book be exceedingly helpful to that end.

Christ in Us is Our Hope and Glory

From the moment we say *yes* to Jesus as Savior and Lord, we are imbued with God's Holy Spirit. 2 Corinthians 1:22 and 2 Corinthians 5:5 clearly relate that we receive the Holy Spirit "who is the guarantee of our inheritance," according to Ephesians 1:14. As a Believer, your individual spirit has been made sinless and you have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to guide and help you in all things. Considering how Jesus was conceived both fully human and fully God and that He relied on His Spiritual relationship—not the powers of deity—we have every reason to live according to Christ's example. As a Believer your new spirit has access to the full measure of the Holy Spirit who resides within you.

The Holy Spirit has many roles in God's scheme of things and therefore many descriptive names. A study about the Holy Spirit is recommended for all Believers to help us cement the reality and extent of the power and ability to which we have access. But for the sake of this introductory understanding, know that the Holy Spirit is the Third Person of the God-head. He is equal with God the Father and God the Son, yet is a distinct Person of the God-head. He has His own areas of ministry.

The Hebrew word uniformly used for the Holy Spirit is *rumach*, meaning "breath," "wind," or "breeze." The word spirit in the Greek is *pneuma*, also

meaning “breath,” or “blow.” In Genesis, we read that God breathed on Adam to give him life. This gives us understanding that the Holy Spirit is the breath of life. He is also referred to as the power of God. Two major instances where we can learn of the ability of His power are found first in the development of all Creation, and also in the resurrection of Christ. He is referred to as the Spirit of the Lord, the fear (honor/reverence) of the Lord, the prophets/prophecy, wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, might, life, unity, truth, conviction, adoption, sanctification, sound mind, supplication, union, communion, grace, judgment, and revelation. He is called our teacher, friend, and author of our faith. He is the source of God’s power for us, ever available, and the fulfillment of our salvation in Christ. His gifts include spiritual baptism, indwelling accessibility, illumination, and internal guidance.

The same power that resurrected Jesus from the dead—the Holy Spirit—resides in Believers to empower us to *overcome*. The word overcome as used in the New Testament is the Greek word *nikao*, which means to subdue (literally or figuratively), to conquer, overcome, prevail, and get the victory. This word is used twenty-eight times in the New Testament and each time conveys that Believers have the power for total victory over all that comes against our faith.

The problem is that we haven’t been sufficiently taught how to live as victorious Christians in this fallen world. Just as a child must be taught many things to successfully grow and mature and be an effective individual, so must we be trained-up as new supernaturally-born Believers to become successful, mature Christ-followers. We need to have a better understanding of the two worlds in which we live as born-again Believers. My prayer is that you find the teaching provided here helpful in guiding you to live out of your new spirit.

Living in Two Worlds

God has created the physical world within the spiritual world. Both co-exist. The physical world is subject to the spiritual world. In our natural physically-born state, we live according to the condition of the fallen physical world. However, those who become supernaturally born-again live in both the spiritual and the physical worlds. Furthermore, being spiritually renewed, Believers have the distinct ability to overcome the hostile physical world.

With the help of God's Holy Spirit, we can refuse to be influenced or controlled by this physical world. The Apostle Paul instructs Believers in Romans 12:1-2:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.³³

As mentioned, the moment a person is born-again, their spirit is completely regenerated and made holy, but their soul and body need to be subjected to their new spirit with the help of the Holy Spirit. Our soul and body are still targets of the enemy. In fact, the primary battleground of choice for the enemy of God is in our mind. This is why we're instructed to be diligent to take every thought captive, "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."³⁴ [Emphasis added], (2

Corinthians 10:4-5)

Additionally, the Apostle John instructs Believers, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.”³⁵ (1 John 2:15-17)

Born-again Believers are to be *in* this world but no longer *of* this world. This is true in terms of our new eternal spirit. But until our physical lives come to an end, we remain in this fallen world capable of being influenced by it, unless we are diligent about cooperating with the Holy Spirit’s *sanctifying* [purifying] power.

Our free-will is not automated to *godly choices only* at the time we’re born-again. Free-will would not be *free* if that were the case. God wants relationship with those who want relationship with Him, as demonstrated by all the choices we make, even in our daily lives. Obedience to God and His ways demonstrates our desire for Him.

Explaining more about the Christian’s predicament of living in two worlds, Dr. Tom Barkey, Pastor of Church of Grace in Yorba Linda, California explains:

The two worlds Believers live in are very different and yet quite similar. Just as the physical world has absolute laws such as the law of gravity, physics, mechanics, motion or thermodynamics, so are there absolute laws in the spiritual world. Physical beings remain in the physical world. Spiritual beings, on the other hand, can visit the physical world. Spiritual beings, both heavenly and demonic, influence people as they are welcomed or entertained by individuals. The demonic spirits are enemies of God and all

who belong to Him and they are consistently active seeking to ensnare Believers to destroy their testimony. Revelation 12:11 addressing the final defeat of Satan and his followers explains “And they [referring to Believers in Christ] have conquered him [the enemy] by the blood of the Lamb [Jesus] and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”³⁶ If Christians don’t rely on the indwelling power and help of the Holy Spirit, they can become entangled with the sin of the world. Christians need to learn the laws of the spiritual world to overcome the hostility of physical world. Christians are uniquely capable of living in the physical world by the leading of their new spirit, guided by the Holy Spirit.

To be victorious Christians in this physical world, we need to learn the laws, instructions, and methods of the spiritual world. You’ll find more about the laws of the spiritual world in Chapter Three. Once you understand the spiritual laws, in order to effectively operate within them and bring transformation to your physical world, you will need to follow these ten instructions. I call them the *Ten Commandments of Effective Faith*:

- Believe God
- Surrender Self to Jesus
- Rely on the Holy Spirit
- Study and apply the Word of God
- Maintain fellowship/accountability with other Believers
- Actively seek to mature your faith
- Obey God
- Resist the devil
- Operate in Christ’s authority

- Expect God's best to occur

If you have faith in Christ, you have every reason to walk in hope. Not a hope that's akin to wishful thinking, but a confident hope—a certain hope that knows your victory is assured! You need to learn how to rightly apply sound faith. My goal for you is that you will be fully-equipped to experience all the breakthroughs you're entitled to according to God's will, by the time you finish reading this book.

In the next chapter, we'll learn the importance of a clear understanding about *faith in Christ* in order to have faith conviction that can move mountains.

CHAPTER TWO

Faith Realized

Apprehend God's Promises

Christ in us is our hope and glory.¹ This hope is available for anyone who desires to discover and live in life-giving truth. With the power of the Holy Spirit to overcome the obstacles in this life readily available, why don't we see more victorious Christians?

By reading the pages of the *Gospels*, (the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), we learn of the miracles that Jesus and His disciples performed. In verse after verse, Scriptures proclaim the power available to all who place their faith in Jesus. Based on Scriptures, we should find abounding hope in any circumstance! So why do hope and the supernatural breakthroughs people need seem elusive? As I wrote in the Introduction, hindering the miraculous has to do with unbelief.

Unbelief is a condition certain to prevent God from working in our lives. He will never work against the human will. Many who profess Christianity choose not to believe that miracles are available today. The two viewpoints are *Cessationists* (those who believe that the supernatural gifts revealed in Scripture died with the death of the last of the original Apostles) and *Continuationists* (those who believe that the supernatural gifts have never ceased to be available, but have merely not been properly accessed.) I explore this more in Chapters Five and Seven. For the purposes of this chapter, I'm assuming that you are one who would not reject the occurrence of a miracle if that miracle made your life better.

Accessing God's Promises

For the actualization of the miraculous, faith must be based in Christ—His power, will, and intentions for humanity in this earthly existence. Christ is referred to as the *Living Word* of God because He personified God's promise to send a Redeemer. In effect, He is the embodiment of all God's promises.

The Bible is referred to as the *Written Word* of God, because in Scripture we find all the recorded promises of God.

There are two primary Greek words that describe Scripture. Both are translated *word* in the New Testament.

Logos principally refers to the total inspired Word of God and to Jesus—the Living Word. *Logos* is found in John 1:1; Luke 8:11; Philippians 2:16; Hebrews 4:12; and other verses. Strictly defined, *logos* means logic.² However, in Greek philosophy, *logos* also referred to a universal, divine reason that acts according to the principle of the universe. Over time the word came to mean a mediating principle between God and the world and can be understood as God's Word or the Divine Wisdom, which is immanent in the world.³

The second Greek word translated *word* is *rhema*, which refers to the spoken word. *Rhema* literally means an *utterance* (individually, collectively, or specifically). Examples are found in Luke 1:38; 3:2; 5:5; and Acts 11:16.⁴ As explained by Advanced Training Institute International, *rhema* is a verse or portion of Scripture that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention with application to a current situation or need for direction.⁵

Faith in God and His Word (all forms) is the kind of faith that pleases God and that brings Him to express His pleasure by blessing us in our spirit, soul, and physical existence. The very first miracle that comes through the four-step process of 1. Understanding; 2. Accepting; 3.

Believing; and 4. Receiving is that of redemption. Recreating our spirit-man is a miracle of spiritual redemption. The fact that God still redeems those who by faith in Jesus want to be reunited with Him is reason enough for me to believe that other miracles remain available today. Yet, the reality is we don't hear of, see, or experience many miraculous claims that are often dismissed as being natural world events.

Believe and You Shall Receive

Whether we realize the truth or not, we all receive according to what we believe. If you believe you are second-rate, you will never achieve first place. You will conduct your life, even your thought life, according to your beliefs. If on the other hand, you believe you are who God says you are through faith in Christ, you will experience life accordingly. We will receive according to what we believe, whether or not what we believe is true or good. This concept is entirely different from the so-called *Power of Positive Thinking*. We cannot *will* matters into existence. Only God can do that. We can, however, influence what reality we experience based on what we believe. We will receive according to what we believe, whether or not what we believe is true or good. When I travel and speak I ask my audiences, "Who in this room wants to live their life on the basis of a lie?" No one ever raises their hand to that question. How vitally important for us then, that we make certain we know and believe truth, which is found in God by faith in Jesus.

If we can learn to believe that God can do what He says He can do, which includes defying physical laws, then we position ourselves to experience the miraculous. God's intervention in your life for the good is available to you, if your faith is in Christ. Believe this!

Modern Day Miracle Battle of Life and Death

Natalie and Paul Valcarcel are two people I know who exemplify believing God for His Word. Natalie is an itty-bitty-sized person with a tremendous-sized faith. Her story of believing God against all odds and professional medical advice is one that is sure to inspire you to willfully demonstrate spiritual tenacity in your own trials.

When Natalie was twenty-nine years old, she began to experience such serious pain before her monthly periods that she writhed on the floor and thought that she would die from the pain alone. One day while at work, the pain became so severe that she was taken to the emergency room. The medical professionals performed an ultra-sound only to find a fibroid tumor.

The doctor assured Natalie that the tumor wasn't anything for her to worry about, that women have fibroids frequently. Noting the tumor was only six centimeters, the doctor concluded that nothing needed to be done. She was completely convinced that there was no reason for alarm.

This diagnosis came just two weeks before Natalie's wedding day. With her upcoming marriage to Paul in mind, naturally Natalie asked, "Is this going to affect my having children?" The doctor responded that many women with fibroids are able to conceive and that she considered Natalie's worry a non-issue.

Natalie and Paul were married, but within a few months she noticed that things just weren't the same as before. She felt the mass within growing, but was consistently told by her doctor not to worry.

About nine months after their wedding, Natalie decided to see the doctor again, especially since her level of discomfort was increasing. At this visit, the doctor reported that the mass was bigger than the original ultra-sound showed. She reported that the fibroid should probably be removed

by a fairly simple surgery. In Natalie's words:

I went in for surgery believing that Dr. Luna would simply remove the tumor and everything would be just fine. I believe that she had the same confidence as well. In the middle of my surgery while I was still under anesthesia, she came out to the waiting room where Paul and our families waited. She asked to speak to Paul and told him that the tumor was much bigger than she had thought and that they could not remove the tumor without taking the uterus. She came out to get permission from Paul to continue to proceed. She expressed that she felt I wasn't ready to wake up and find I'd undergone a hysterectomy. She told him with tears in her eyes *I hate when bad things happen to good people*. Paul told her not to perform the hysterectomy—that he wanted to talk to me first.

When I came to, Dr. Luna told me she was unable to remove the tumor. She explained that I needed to recover and then they would attempt another surgery at a later date. Since she had vacation planned, we agreed that we'd use that time for my recovery and we'd plan the next procedure when she returned.

Several days later, the doctor called Natalie and explained that the tumor was enveloping the uterus. She told Natalie not to hold out any hope of conceiving at this stage due to the development and placement of the tumor. Based on all her medical experience and the threat of the tumor, the doctor recommended a hysterectomy. Natalie explains her phone conversation with the doctor:

I trusted my doctor and listened to what she

recommended. She wanted to start me on hormone therapy to get my body ready for surgery. She explained that hormones were the next immediate step. I felt a resistance within and I told her that I didn't feel like I wanted to do that right now. I needed to pray about it. I didn't want to make any decisions without prayer. I asked her to give me some time to pray and assured her that I was listening to her.

After I hung up with Dr. Luna, I went to the Lord in prayer. I admit I was kind of mad and asked God, *What's happening?* I told Him as I sat on the couch still recovering, *I need to hear from you so I'm not leaving this spot until You show me what I need to do in this situation. I don't know what to do or how to handle this. But You do, so I'm going to sit here until you speak to me.*

Natalie then sat in utter silence and stillness. No television, no radio, no reading. She sat and listened, determined not to move until she heard from the Lord.

I didn't hear anything from Him all day. When I went to bed that night I laid down and no sooner did my head reach the pillow than I heard Him say, *Be fruitful and multiply.* I thought, *Really? That's all You're going to tell me?* I naturally thought about the passage in Genesis where God instructs all of humanity to be fruitful and multiply and concluded that I already knew that instruction. A bit put off, I fell asleep.

When I woke up the next morning, a bit perplexed that all I heard God say was *Be fruitful and multiply*, I decided to

look up every passage in Scripture where those words are used. I found five places in the Bible. In each instance, God was issuing a command, telling the person to do what He said, with the added admonition that what He said was going to happen. I remember thinking, *Okay, I understand now that you want me to be fruitful and multiply. You spoke to me with this command in such a way that it is going to happen. I believe You so I conclude that it is Your will for me to have children. But what do I do next? You're commanding my body to do this.* Then I heard God instruct me to read the story of Jacob. I thought, *What? The story of Jacob? What's that story got to do with my situation?* If God said read about Abraham and Sarah or Zacharias and Elizabeth that would make sense, but Jacob? Then I heard God tell me to read the whole story of Jacob.

After I read the story, and really pondered over the words, I realized that Jacob understood the power of blessing. He believed if he could just grab onto God's available blessing, that blessing would be his. He went to extremes to get blessings in his life. He lied, he deceived, and he wrestled. He did whatever he had to do to get a blessing spoken over him knowing that if the blessing was spoken, what was said would happen. So I asked God, *What blessings have been spoken over me that I may have discarded or not taken seriously or forgotten?* The Lord replied, *Your wedding blessing.*

With the fresh understanding from Jacob's story that what God commands is ours for the taking, I immediately called my mom to ask her about the blessing she insisted

Paul and I have spoken over us on our wedding day.

When Paul and Natalie were married, Natalie's mother insisted on having a blessing spoken over the two of them by both sets of parents. Her mother is a Believer, but not her father. Paul's parents are Believers. That her father agreed to participate was a miracle in itself. On the day of the wedding, their parents spoke Psalm 128 over Paul and Natalie. "Just before we ate our dinner following the wedding ceremony, we heard these words from our parents,"

Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) is everyone who fears, reveres, and worships the Lord, who walks in His ways and lives according to His commandments. For you shall eat [the fruit] of the labor of your hands; happy (blessed, fortunate, enviable) shall you be, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the innermost parts of your house; your children shall be like olive plants round about your table. Behold, thus shall the man be blessed who reverently and worshipfully fears the Lord. May the Lord bless you out of Zion [His sanctuary], and may you see the prosperity of Jerusalem all the days of your life; Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel! (Psalm 128, Amplified)

Natalie shares her response:

At the time they spoke, I received their words as a nice general blessing from Scripture, and thought, *That was nice, Mom, thanks.* I dismissed the reading without paying much attention. But once I looked the psalm up and read the words, I realized that the blessing spoken over us was for

me personally as the wife and for Paul as the husband. I started thinking like Jacob and snatched this blessing.

Every day when I was in pain or not feeling well or the tumor seemed to have the upper hand, I would say, *Thank you, Lord, that I am a fruitful vine in the innermost parts of my home and that I will see my children around my table like olive plants. And I thank you that I will see my children's children.* I held on and prayed daily. I understood without a doubt the Lord's will was for me to have children.

The experience was very difficult for Natalie as the tumor continued to grow. The doctor would compassionately speak to Natalie stating that she didn't understand what Natalie was doing. Dr. Luna was convinced that Natalie couldn't have children based on the tumor she actually saw during the first attempt at surgery. She admonished Natalie stating, "You need to do something about this. I don't want to see you end up in the emergency room with your life on the line."

With respect for her doctor, Natalie replied, "I know. But I'm still praying." She didn't want to dismiss her doctor or come across that she was disrespecting her professional opinion. So she told the doctor, "I'm grateful for you, and I appreciate you being patient with me as I wait for a miracle." I was honest with her but not at all dismissive. She was respectful of me, too, but clearly quite frustrated with me at times."

Every six months Natalie was checked hoping that the doctor would say things were getting better. She also knew that she needed a witness to the miracle she was believing God for. What better person than the doctor who believed the prospect of conceiving a child was impossible?

Five years went by as the tumor grew. Natalie looked like she was six-months pregnant. People often asked her when she was due. She'd reply,

“No, I’m not pregnant. I have a fibroid tumor. But I’m believing God, and I know one day I will be pregnant.”

The tumor growth demanded an incredible amount of blood. There were large arteries feeding the tumor. Her doctor sternly instructed Natalie to make the decision to have the hysterectomy, even threatening to make Natalie a ward of the state. In March, 2010, Dr. Luna told Natalie that she was putting her on a deadline—if Natalie didn’t get the miracle she was waiting for within a couple of months, Dr. Luna would schedule the hysterectomy.

As the months went by, Natalie did her best to honor her doctor while still believing God for a miracle. The day before her scheduled doctor’s visit, Natalie received a phone call from a friend. She asked if Natalie had ever heard of a procedure called fibroid embolization. Her friend had heard about the procedure on the radio, called the number given, and gave them Natalie’s name and phone number. She told Natalie to expect a call from that doctor’s office.

The same day the nurse consultant from the office running the radio advertisement called Natalie. Natalie told her of the seriousness of her condition. As Natalie now looked nearly full-term pregnant, clearly the fibroid was not a small tumor. The nurse explained the procedure to Natalie. Natalie took the information she’d learned with her to her appointment with Dr. Luna. She asked the doctor if she’d heard of the fibroid embolization procedure. Dr. Luna had, so Natalie then asked, “What do you think about the prospect for me, especially since a hysterectomy is so drastic?” Dr. Luna didn’t think the procedure would work for me, but was willing to try because she’d seen me hold out so long for a miracle. Natalie recalls what this season was like for her:

In my prayer time I clearly felt confirmation in my spirit that this was the direction to go. I wasn’t daunted by my

doctor's claim that I'd be infertile. God was able to have Abraham and Sarah conceive even when they were way past their ability to do so. I thought, *If they had zero chances and God had them conceive, then if I have zero chances God can have me conceive.*

On the day of the embolization procedure, I felt the Spirit of God all over me comforting me that I was in His will. Just before I was prepped, one of the nurses asked me, *Do you want to have children?* I said *Yes.* She replied, *Then you shouldn't have this procedure, because there is no possibility you can get pregnant after this.* I assured her that I'd been apprised of the dangers but that I'd prayed about my situation, and I was confident that I was to do the embolization.

The nurse then went to the specialist who personally approached me with the same inquiry. They had a major concern about my decision. The doctor asked, *You do realize that this procedure causes infertility, don't you?* I replied, *I understand.*

They finally started the procedure. I was not put under any anesthesia and had been forewarned that the surgery would be extremely painful. I was told the doctor would be very generous with pain medication. Yet I felt no pain! I could have been given as much pain medication as I wanted, I simply needed to ask for it. But I didn't need medication. I felt nothing.

After the procedure, I still didn't need any pain medication. The nurses said I was really strong. And I told them that I really wasn't, that Christ was my strength, and He's all I needed. They tried to encourage me to take

medication, believing I was in shock. So they gave me morphine which made me sick. I then insisted on taking none.

The specialist came in the next day to express that the operation was very successful. He explained, *We tell everyone if they want to get pregnant not to do this procedure. But in your case I think your chances of getting pregnant are better than before.* He said that the arteries to the fibroid were the largest he'd ever seen. He explained that the process is to sever the arteries and then to plug them by putting two or three pellets at the severed ends. But in my case, he had to use sixteen to eighteen pellets to accomplish the plugging. Clearly I'd been feeding a monster in my body.

We're now at the end of June, 2010. My husband was hired by Church of Grace to lead worship. Because of my need to recover from the embolism procedure, I didn't attend church with him until late July or early August. No one knew who I was. While sitting in the main sanctuary watching the worship team practice, a little lady named Mary, who had been praying over the people who would eventually sit in the then empty chairs, came up to me. *Hi, I don't think I've ever met you, my name is Mary.* I told her my name and who I was after which time she went back to praying over the chairs. About ten minutes later she came up to me again and asked, *Do you have children?* I replied, *No, not yet. We're believing for children.* Her face lit up, *You are? The reason I came over to you is because I was praying over on the other side and the Lord told me to tell you that you are going to have a child.* I explained a little of what I'd been through, and that

I was believing God for a miracle. She began jumping up and down, excited to have obeyed the Lord to speak His word and provide confirmation.

Based on Mary's prophetic word from the Lord, I expected the tumor would shrink as the blood flow ceased. Instead, the tumor developed more arteries and took on life again. The fibroid not only didn't shrink, but got bigger and lodged up into my ribs. I had a hard time sitting or breathing. My doctor was really frustrated with me and said, *I told you there was no guarantee the embolism procedure would work. Now things are getting worse and I have to put you on disability. Maybe pain in your ribs will be the thing that will push you to finally do the hysterectomy.* I replied, *Okay, just give me the weekend to pray, and I'll get back to you on Monday about the hysterectomy.*

I went home that Friday discouraged because I know what the Word says, and I believe God's promises, but everything seemed to negate them. I couldn't get physically comfortable. I was worried how we would pay our bills with me not working. So, I just prayed. I prayed until I got peace back again. I didn't physically feel better but I had the peace of God and that was all I needed. I prayed, *I know you have this, God, and I thank you for your promise.*

Sunday of that weekend, sitting in the parking lot of the church, while Paul was practicing with the band, I prayed and brought up all my concerns before the Lord. As I remained quiet, God spoke to me saying, *You will have a child. And you will have three. And this is how you will know—the Pastor will confirm it to you today.* I replied, *Lord, just as you say,*

I believe Your will will be done. I sat in the sanctuary where Pastor Tom Barkey was doing his rounds of shaking of hands and greetings before service. He shook my hand and went on his way. The service went on as usual, except at the end. That's when Pastor Tom said, *I'm going to do something a little different. The Lord just told me to do this now. This has happened to me three times before, and that is, the Lord has told me that someone here is going to have a baby. With two of the women that I have given this Word to before, they were pregnant within months. The other one it took a year before she got pregnant. This girl here today doesn't even know that I am talking about her, but when I shook her hand this morning, the Lord told me "pregnant". I asked the Lord, Do I tell her now? and the Lord said No. Tell her when I tell you to tell her. The Lord is telling me to tell her right now.* He then looked at me and said *Natalie, this is you. And this is what the Lord is saying to you right now 'Nothing is impossible with God!'* I said out loud, *The Lord told me that you would confirm this to me today.* He said to come up and tell them what the Lord told me. So I did, and then he prayed for me. That day I emailed my doctor and told her that I wasn't going to do the hysterectomy. This was November, 2010.

I still had no relief physically. Everything in the natural world went against everything the Lord was speaking to me. Everyday I had to make a conscious decision to believe what the Lord had spoken to me.

I went through the month of December with lots of pain and discomfort and prayed for the Lord to take the fibroid away. I managed to attend a New Year's Eve party

with my husband where we praised the Lord for the New Year. When I woke up that New Year's Day morning, I was surprised that I slept the whole night. When I got up I realized I had no pain or discomfort at all! This grace was given to me for the next 4 months.

At the beginning of March, I had a very painful period. I closed the door to my bedroom to pray regarding the pain. I heard the Lord say, *This will be your last period.* I thanked the Lord and went out the door to the living room and told my husband, *This will be my last period!* My husband, not really paying attention to my statement, said, *Okay,* and continued watching T.V. And sure enough it was my last period! On April 11th, my birthday, I learned I was pregnant!

I emailed my doctor immediately and told her that my miracle came through! She emailed back the next day asking me to come in to have some blood work done to be certain the pregnancy was not tubal. I did, and my hormone levels were very good. Next she ordered an ultrasound. Finding the uterus took a long time because of the size of the tumor, but the ultrasound tech eventually found the embryonic sack which proved that this was a miracle. I was about four weeks pregnant.

I went in to see my doctor a few weeks later and she listened to determine if we could hear a heartbeat. When she heard the beat, we both gasped! She said, *You must have a direct line to God!* This was my last appointment with her because she was referring me to a high-risk pregnancy specialist due to my age and situation.

Dr. Montgomery, the specialist, was very concerned about my situation. He was afraid I would not live through the pregnancy. I told him, *Don't worry, I'm not going to die.* He said, *I heard you are a woman of faith.* I said, *I am.* He said, *Then you are the perfect person to go through a pregnancy like this because faith's what's going to be required to get you through this.*

The tumor continued to grow. When I was six-months pregnant I was admitted to the hospital because the tumor was compressing my right kidney. Upon admission, I asked if I could have my very painful right leg checked. They sent me for an ultrasound on my leg. The next morning my specialist came into my room and said, *You have a blood clot from your knee to your groin. It could be past the groin but we can't see how far because the tumor is blocking our view of far it goes. This blood clot is like a bullet in a gun ready to go off...* then he broke down and started to cry. When he could continue, he told me that before he came in to tell me this news, he'd had a meeting with over thirty doctors in their hospital concerning my case—not one of them wanted to take me as a patient. Not one of them felt I would survive. He called UCLA and USC to see if they would take my case and they asked what he thought they could do that he couldn't. He called other Kaiser doctors to see if anyone would take me. He found one doctor who said she would take me on. So he said that he was sending me right now to the Kaiser Hospital on Sunset Blvd. in L.A. He teared-up again and gave me hug and said, *I don't want you to die.* I assured him, *Dr. Montgomery, I'm not going to die. The next time you see me, you will see me holding my baby.* He replied, *I really*

hope that happens. Look at you! You're as cool as a cucumber! I then said, *Dr. Montgomery, I know God didn't bring me this far for me to die in the end.* To which he responded, *I wish I had your faith.*

Immediately after that conversation, I was sent to the Kaiser in L.A. by ambulance. I was admitted to the ICU where I was watched carefully. When I arrived in my room, I got a call from Dr. Montgomery. He hadn't thought I'd survive the ambulance ride. My new doctor, Dr. Friedrich, put me on a light blood thinner because I was pregnant. She told me the medication was only going to keep the blockage from getting bigger, but wouldn't dissolve the blood clot.

I was in ICU for two weeks under close watch. After two weeks, the doctor wanted to do an ultrasound on my leg to see how the blood clot was doing. I had the ultrasound done and the blood clot was nowhere to be found! I asked the doctor what she thought happened and she said she didn't know, but that maybe the blood thinner worked more effectively than she'd expected. I reminded her of what she said about the blood thinner originally. She said she knew but didn't know how else to explain the absence of the clot. I told her that we had a lot of people praying and I stated, *This is a miracle.* She said, *Well, this will definitely make your delivery a little less complicated.*

A week later, they did surgery to deliver my baby who was born two months before her due date. This life-threatening surgery/delivery ended up going as perfectly as anyone could have hoped.

Natalie and Paul's baby girl, Heaven Faith Valcarcel, was born on October 19, 2011, and weighed three pounds and seven ounces.

The tumor was not removed at the time of Heaven's birth for fear of Natalie losing too much blood and not surviving the surgery. The surgery to remove the tumor was scheduled two and a half months later. During the surgery, they removed the eighteen-pound tumor and her uterus. What they thought would be a four-hour surgery took only an hour and a half.

Today both the mother and baby are completely healthy. They are a miraculous testimony of God's fulfilling His promises and giving us the faith we need to persevere and see a matter through to His perfect end. But for the Valcarcel's, this is just the beginning. For God had told them they would have three children.

When I interviewed Natalie she expressed:

God was developing our faith in the process over the five and half long years. We had enough faith to start the journey, but He clearly built our faith during that time. For years and years, I prayed for a miracle and nothing happened except the growing threat of the tumor. But I was convinced that God can do anything and usually not the way I expect Him to work. So whenever I had thoughts of doubt or fear or unbelief, I intentionally threw the thoughts out and didn't give them any credence. The Lord showed me many things in the five years—not the least of which is to be bold and press on expecting God to fulfill His promises. Some of the things God told me to do didn't make sense with the limited information we had, but I did them anyway confident I was hearing Him. I was committed to trust and obey Him. During the times when I really struggled the most, I sought the Lord. I would

literally force myself on the floor to pray. If I prayed while sitting, I'd find myself multitasking and becoming distracted. For me to be completely focused, I had to be on the floor.

Having experienced all we have with God with the birth of our daughter, Heaven, we don't doubt God's promise that we will have three children. How He chooses to fulfill His Word is entirely up to Him.

I chose not to edit out elements of her story so that you can understand the constant battle she was in and the continual effort she had to make to intentionally apply to receiving God's blessing. Natalie is an example of what we can endure and how we must persevere through to the end, working hard to fight fears and doubt if we want to receive the fulfillment of God's promises in our life.

Understand, too, that as you hold out in faith—as you stand against opposition to the promise you have from God, you are being a witness for God in the process. The promise fulfillment is not the end of your testimony to His faithfulness—you have a testimony during the process as well.

What I want you to clearly grasp from the Valcarcel's story is that they refused to believe any report other than God's, confident that He could and will fulfill His Word. By following Jesus' example of listening to God the Father and cooperating with Him and His plan, even though Natalie's very life was at risk, they experienced the miraculous. They received according to what God said, because of their belief, against all earthly odds. Hebrews 11:6 reads, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."⁶

Faith Pleases God

To understand faith (our belief system), we need to realize that faith can be impacted for better or worse by what we believe to be truth, whether or not what we believe actually is true. Faith can be increased with added knowledge of God's truth and experience. Faith can also be decreased with thoughts, ideas, and conclusions contrary to the Word of God.

The enemy of God does not want Believers to have effective faith, so he is continually at work to cause us to question and doubt God and His Word, character, will, and intentions. By trying to keep Christians ignorant about God and faith, Satan renders our faith impotent, which directly impacts the results and power of Christ at work in and through our lives. Faith is measurable in terms of size, purity, ability, and *commendability*.

God Commends Believing Faith

In Matthew 8:5-13, we can read the story of the Roman Centurion living in Capernaum whose faith impressed Jesus so much that He turned to the crowd that was following Him and said, "Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith."⁷ Highly important to note here is Jesus was not commending faith in and of itself. Rather, He was commending the Centurion's faith *in Jesus* as the promised Savior/Deliverer, also referred to as the *Christ* or *Messiah*. *Christ* is the Greek word for the Hebrew word, *Messiah*, which means Anointed One.

Perhaps Jesus' declaration that if His followers had faith the size of a mustard seed, they would be able to move mountains⁸ is comforting for you. It most definitely is for me. We don't need to have the great quantity of faith in Christ required to *move mountains*, but what faith we have must be pure and undefiled to be pleasing to God.

The hope and breakthroughs you need at this point in your life, whether as dramatic as the Valcarcel's or not, are something you can expect to have, if you properly understand and apply your faith correctly—if you effectively battle the enemy's relentless attempts against you.

Belief is Essential to Faith

Belief is essential to faith. To believe is to be convinced through mental processes. Faith is having enough belief to act even though the fullness of what is believed is not yet manifest. The Bible states, “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,” Hebrews 11:1.⁹

Scriptural belief, as Jesus demonstrated, demands that we act in faith before God acts in reality based on what God reveals He will do. God initiates and we respond. By stepping out according to our belief in God's Word, character, will, and intent, we demonstrate our faith. Our belief is what releases God's promises in our lives. We demonstrate to both worlds in which we live—the physical and the spiritual—that we believe God is who He says He is and He will do what He's said He will do. This is faith that God commends.

Understand however, that much of what we call faith in our post-modern culture is merely a mental assent. A mental assent, or belief, is not *acting* by faith. “Our spiritual lives depend upon our constant affirmation of what God has declared, what God is in Christ, and what we are to the Father in Christ. *Confession* is faith's confirmation.”¹⁰ Correspondingly, action is faith's fulfillment. By acting on our faith, stepping out expecting God to fulfill His Word before He has done so, we affirm His Word. This is the kind of faith that pleases God—faith that He rewards. For anyone to be able to do this, especially in the face of opposition and potential harm,

they must be utterly convinced, without a shred of doubt, that they are acting according to God's revealed will.

Effective Faith Positively Influences the World

Through faith in Christ, we are saved *from* the world, but for a time we must still live *in* the world. Why? Because God equips Believers for works of service on earth, in partnership with Him, to draw all men who will come unto Him. Believers have the privilege of partnering with God to help others discover the same personal salvation we've found. The blessed gift of salvation through faith in Christ is not just for our personal redemption, but to also demonstrate power over the ravages of this world, thereby helping to bring others to the saving knowledge and the overcoming power of faith in Christ. Effective faith is *others-focused*—by that I mean effective faith seeks the good for others over and above the self. Philippians 2:3 reads, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”¹¹ Notice in the Scriptures how the many miracles, signs, and wonders done were always for the benefit of others and the glory of God. Faith that seeks to serve the self will fail. James 4:3 explains, “You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.”¹² We are encouraged in Scripture to present our personal requests before God, and we are also encouraged to let others know of our needs that they may pray for us—that we pray for one another. Every one of God's promises to answer prayer is a conditional promise. The secret to receiving answers to prayer is satisfying the conditions, which is not difficult. We are simply required to become disciples of Jesus and learn His ways. We can do nothing. What's important is that we *become*.

Jesus spent much time explaining that He must leave this world in order

to fulfill God's promise of redemption. However, He added that He wouldn't leave His followers without power. The Bible is very clear that in the last days, the evil and wickedness that is in this world will increase. Jesus firmly instructed His followers to remember that even though we will have troubles in this world, we are to take heart, for He has overcome the world.¹³ So by not leaving us without power, He has left us with the ability to tap into God's demonstrated supernatural victory over this physical world. Jesus demonstrated and taught His early disciples not only about saving faith, but also how to wield effective faith, and to instruct others to do likewise.

In the next chapter, we'll explore the ways we can prepare ourselves in order to take hold of all that Christ died to provide those who sincerely profess and embrace the Christian faith.

CHAPTER THREE

Faith Personalized

Identify with Christ

Identify theft is a raging problem in this age of technology and global connectedness. But such theft is far from a new crime. The enemy of God has been working since Adam and Eve to cause people to give up their rightful God-given identity and corresponding authority. Because of our adversary's work, that we understand God's character, will, and intentions for us in context with His many promises is vitally important.

As discussed in Chapter One, once we resolutely determine to believe in and receive Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are spiritually made into entirely new creations. From this new position, we are no longer identified with the enemy of God, but instead with God Himself through faith in Jesus. As such, we have a complete new identity and authority. The Scriptures declare that we are now kings and priests able to reign and rule with Christ. Believers are part of the royal family of the King of kings. We are joint heirs with Jesus in all that God owns and does. What a shame that so few of us thoroughly understand our new identity—that so many of us have been deceived.

What we believe is determined by our individual *free-will*. *We believe only that which we are willing to believe*. With this reality, the strategy of the enemy is to prevent us from being willing to believe the truth, especially about our new identity in Christ. He uses doubts and lies in various attacks to keep us from being willing to believe the truth. This is how he robs, steals, kills, and destroys.

We Must Know God's Promises to Claim Them

Don Gossett, co-author of *Words that Move Mountains*, shared his story of an extended time of financial lack. He wrote, "I asked God many questions. "Why are we in such desperate need financially?" "Why did we lose our home by repossession?" Asking questions when we are suffering is natural. But what Gossett reveals is how we must take hold of the supernatural when we need personal breakthroughs. He wrote:

During that time, I read a wonderful book by Vernon Howard called *Word Power*. God used the message of that book to help me freshly understand the power of my words, and He gave me this Scripture: "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" (Amos 3:3) God was asking me, "Do you want to walk with Me? Then you must agree with Me. You agree with Me by saying what My Word says. You have disagreed with Me by speaking lack, sickness, fear, defeat, and inability. If you want to walk with Me, you must agree with Me." As this truth became real to me, I asked His forgiveness for my failure to agree with Him and His Word.

I must not hasten away from the truth of Amos 3:3. It's [in] the heart of all sincere Christians to walk closely with the Lord. The Bible records the testimony of Enoch: "[He] *walked with God.*" (Genesis 5:24) Enoch wasn't the only person who could walk with God; you and I also can walk with Him. Hebrews 11:5 says that Enoch *pleased God* by agreeing in faith with God. We can walk just as closely with God as Enoch did if we choose to agree with Him in faith. How do we agree with God? We agree by saying what God says while disagreeing with the wicked, lying devil.¹

We need to learn everything we can from Jesus, beginning with His confidence in God the Father's character, will, and intentions toward Him and all humanity. Additionally, we need to learn about Jesus' calling forth God's plans and purposes by faith as demonstrated through miracles, signs, and wonders as He walked this earth. We need to study and understand that Christ taught His disciples how to perform miracles, signs, and wonders, before He left this earth. The same power to overcome that Jesus and His disciples appropriated is available to the Christian Believer today as we work in partnership with God and His plan.

Christians are the Temple of the Holy Spirit

Christ did not leave us as helpless orphans. Just as He promised, His departure ushered in the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, to *indwell* every Christ-Believer, without limitation, as a *guarantee* of our ability to have victory in this life.²

Christ never relied on His deity to live His sinless life. Rather, He called on the wisdom of God the Father, then obeyed the Father to bring forth the power of the Holy Spirit, for the benefit of humanity in His sphere of earthly influence. Through prayer and earnest communion, Christ called on the Father who dispatched His Holy Spirit to help Christ live in victory and produce amazing miracles.

With our faith in Christ, as our Savior, Lord, and Intercessor,³ we are to appropriate the victory life Christ died to secure for us in the same way. Through earnest prayer communion, calling on the Father, and obeying His instructions (that will always be consistent with His *Written Word*—the Bible), we can realize victory in this fallen world in many ways including miracles that defy the physical laws of this world. By seeking to live in the fullness of what Christ offers, as Christ's disciples, we partner with God to

usher in His kingdom. Christians are ambassadors for Christ able to do not only what He did, but even greater things, for our own benefit and the benefit of others, according to the will of the Father.⁴

Grasping Your New Identity in Christ is Essential for Victory

I shared earlier that essential or *saving* faith is the faith required for a person to genuinely believe in and receive Jesus as his/her personal Savior and Lord. As explained in 2 Corinthians 5:17, once a person genuinely places his or her faith in Christ, the old is passed away and all things become new. With our faith placed in Christ, we are made *newly* alive through Christ. The old naturally-born spirit *is* passed away and the new super-naturally-born spirit *is* birthed. By your faith in believing and agreeing with God, He is moved to recreate your eternal spirit. Your spirit is newly born of the Holy Spirit's power—just as miraculous as Christ's virgin birth. This transforming miracle is known as *justification*, which means to be declared righteous or blameless unto God.

This new sinless spirit within you never existed before. Understand that your spirit-man is the real you. Your new spirit does not strive or work at becoming anything different, but is already created entirely perfect.

Now, your soul (mind, will, emotions, and unique personality) and body are, for the first time, *potentially* subject to your new spirit. *Potentially*, because your new spirit affects your life depending upon which aspect of your three-part being you allow to lead. If your soul and/or body are given priority over your new spirit, then your new spirit is not leading. The opportunity for *salvation* (redemption) and *sanctification* (the process of being transformed soul and body) are both reliant upon your will. Our willful response to God's promises is what allows us to take hold of all that God offers, or not. The human will is amazingly powerful.

If you want to live in the fullness of all that Christ offers you in this life, then you must determine to make your soul and body *subject* to your new spirit. If you allow your body and/or soul to lead, your born-again spirit remains but you will live and enjoy life no differently from one who has not placed their faith in Christ. This is the how the Cultural and Congregational Christians referenced earlier live. The Christian who demonstrates effective faith is the one who has allowed his/her new spirit to be master of both soul and body. Only when the new spirit is the control-center for the soul and body can we expect to see and experience the transformed life Christ offers. The new spirit requires that we learn how to *be* our newly-created selves. Intentional retraining of our mental and emotional processes and ordering our mind and body to comply is how we give our new spirit the helm. As we learn more of the truths from God's Word and apply the principles by which effective Christians must live, then we will experience our new spirit's impact in our soul, body, and physical world. We enter into this process daily and can grow and develop more and more our entire life.

We can settle for a renewed spirit or salvation alone, which many people do. These are the ones who needlessly suffer the ravages of this world and feel hopeless, even in their Christian faith. I know, I lived that way for many years. But as I've learned, to intentionally work with the Holy Spirit to bring our mind, body, soul, and strength into agreement with our new spirit is so much better! The beginning starts with a full and proper understanding of the new creatures we are in Christ. Without a full and proper understanding of our regeneration, our faith and its effectiveness will be crippled.

Coming to a proper understanding of who I am with faith in Christ took me a while. And until I did, I experienced seasons, some long seasons in the earlier days of my Christian faith, when my thoughts were influenced by doubt, anxiety, and fear. I thought things such as *I'm second-rate. I always*

come in second place. Others are better than me. I'll never be good enough—I should just accept my 'less than' status. Oftentimes external circumstances contributed to the enemy's success to infiltrate my mind with such thoughts. The human mind—which contains the will—is amazingly vulnerable and therefore a primary battleground of the enemy where he infiltrates our thoughts.

But once I realized that my mind was *unsettled* about who I am in Christ, and I willfully replaced the damaging deceitful thoughts with the truth from God's Word, my countenance and outlook was immediately changed. My ability to better hear God's leading was improved and in short order I could see the path to take for breakthroughs in my circumstances.

With my mind properly functioning on the truth of who I *am* in Christ, nothing could adversely impact my confidence in my Christ-given identity and authority. During these times I've seen incredible answers to prayer and miraculous breakthroughs (some included in the following pages of this book). Breakthroughs such as mine you can also have if you are willing to operate in your new identify in Christ. You accomplish this by learning to replace every thought that sets itself up against the truth of God's Word about who you are in Christ, and focusing on the authority you now have.

Consider the authority given to the Apostle Peter as recorded in Matthew 16:13-19 once he identified himself with Christ:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter,

and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 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.⁵

Peter's belief in Jesus as the Christ, the anointed One—the promised Redeemer sent by God—allowed him to enter into Christ's authority. Christ's authority came from listening to the Father and obeying Him. Christ imparts His authority to Believers who will properly receive that authority.

One of Peter's early experiences of faith in God's Word and power is revealed in Matthew 14:22-33. Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on water toward Jesus who was walking on the water toward Peter. By faith in Jesus' invitation to *come* Peter miraculously defied the laws of this physical world. In fact, noting that Jesus did not operate His earthly existence in any portion of His divinity, but entirely in humanity, they both defied the laws of gravity by faith in obedience to God. Peter simply acted on the command and authority of Jesus expecting God's power to do the rest. He acted in agreement with God. Only when Peter became fearful, (vs. 30), did he *begin* to sink. Clearly God's power was still at work even as Peter became fearful. The passage reveals that Peter *began* to sink. Without God's power, according to the natural laws of this world, he simply would have *immediately sunk*.

Tapping into God's power is the very same for each and every one of us. When we respond to the invitations and instructions of the Father, overcoming fear and doubt, we will do amazing things. However, like Peter, we can be in the midst of doing something miraculous, take our eyes off Jesus and begin to fail. If we, at that moment, recognize that fear has

replaced our faith-focus, we can regroup and continue to defy even the natural laws of this world.

If we do not understand the realities of the new creations we are in Christ, we will not be able to withstand the attacks of the enemy. He will be able to wound us greatly, through fear, doubt, condemnation, and the like, preventing us from breakthrough victory. Without a firm and fixed mindset on who we are in Christ and what God has promised, we are unable to wield the authority that is rightfully, legally, and completely ours.

1 John 4:17 reads: “By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, *because as he is so also are we in this world.*”⁶ [Emphasis added] Let that sink in. In our newly-regenerated state, we are like Him in this world; we are able to do as He did, overcome as He did, and bless others as He did.

2 Peter 1:1-4 continues:

To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.⁷

That we understand we are entirely new creatures in Christ, able to do great and mighty things by God’s power as He directs us, is vital so that He will powerfully bless us and those around us.

Below is a partial list of Bible verses that can help you to thoroughly understand your new self—your new identity in Christ. If you are interested in realizing hope and victorious breakthroughs in your life, don't treat this as a list to skim over. Look up the verses and read them in context. Understand that these professions come from the Word of God and they personally concern you. Meditate on them and get them deep within your heart and mind. Inscribe them within your soul to be readily and confidently called upon at times of need.

Agree with God by declaring these realities aloud as often as possible. I recommend starting each day in prayer before the Lord asking Him to remind you of who you are in Christ. Throughout the day when your mind becomes doubtful or anxious or you've lost your confidence in any way, take time to be reminded of who you are in Christ. This is how we train up the soul and subject the body to the new spirit we receive through faith in Christ. Dr. Neil Anderson published a list of declarations in *Living Free in Christ* (Regal Books, 1993), which I've slightly amended:

I am accepted...

John 1:12	I am God's child
John 15:15	I am Christ's friend
Romans 5:1	I have been justified
1 Cor 6:17	I am united with the Lord, and I am one spirit with Him
1 Cor 6:19	I am indwelled by the Holy Spirit
1 Cor 6:20	I have been bought with a price, I belong to God
1 Cor 12:27	I am a member of Christ's body
Eph 1:1	I am a saint
Eph 1:5	I have been adopted as God's child
Eph 2:18	I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit
Col 1:14	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins
Col 2:10	I am complete in Christ, lacking nothing

I am secure...

- Rom 8:1, 2 I am free forever from condemnation
- Rom 8:28 I am assured that all things work together for good
- Rom 8:31 I am free from any condemning charges against me
- Rom 8:35 I cannot be separated from the love of God
- 1 Cor 1:21, 22 I have been established, anointed and sealed by God
- Phil 1:6 I am confident that the good work that God has begun in me will be perfected
- Phil 3:20 I am a citizen of heaven
- Col 3:3 I am hidden with Christ in God, my old spirit is dead
- 2 Tim 1:7 I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind
- Heb 4:16 I can find grace and mercy in time of need
- 1 John 5:18 I am born of God and the evil one cannot truly harm me

I am significant...

- Matt 5:13, 14 I am the salt and light of the earth
- John 15: 5 I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life.
- John 15:16 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit
- Acts 1:8 I am a personal witness of Christ's by the power of the Holy Spirit
- 1 Cor 3:16 I am God's temple where the Holy Spirit resides
- 2 Cor 5:19 I am a minister of reconciliation for God
- 2 Cor 6:1 I am a co-worker with God (1 Cor 3:9)
- Eph 2:6 I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm
- Eph 2:10 I am God's workmanship created for good works
- Eph 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and confidence
- Phil 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me

The list above is not exhaustive. As you study Scriptures, make a point to record additional verses that reveal who you are in Christ. Meditate on all the Scriptures you find that inform you of your new identity and lock them in your heart and mind. These disciplines are essential for you to be able to refute the enemy's false accusations especially as you encounter life's trials that test your faith.

You may *feel* the very same as you did before you prayed to invite Jesus to be your personal Savior and Lord. But don't let the enemy of God use that to make you *think* you are the same. Feelings are subjective and often unreliable as they are impacted by many influences. What we think is what matters, and in fact, what we think either propels us forward in a victorious, effective faith, or renders us wounded and ineffective in our faith. When what we think lines up with God's truth, we can tap into His power and authority bringing us to the hope and results we desire, according to God's will.

The enemy of God is the adversary of all humanity simply because we were created by God in His image. In the Garden of Eden Satan won a major battle with Adam and Eve and all people born ever since. And once a person receives God's promise of Redemption, that person becomes *yet again* a target of the enemy. But don't let that concern you! He who is in you [the Holy Spirit] is greater than he [Satan] who is in the world.⁸

Be Utterly Convinced of Your New Identity

Your new identity and authority in Christ as a Believer by faith is what you must fully grasp and *put on*. You can't do anything to earn anything from God. All He offers is a gift that you simply need to 1. Understand; 2. Accept; 3. Believe; and 4. Receive. Be aware that the spirit of religion is the enemy of the Spirit of faith. The spirit of religion tries to make you do what

only God can do through striving and works, that is performance. Yet this mind-set will quickly take you out of your rightful spirit-man leadership. Living and moving in the new spirit is not hard, but is, conversely, very easy. We simply accept and step into the new spirit. The fact that the new spirit mind-set is easy is why a lot of people struggle. Understand your new spirit is a gift. There is nothing you can or need to do to qualify, earn points, or improve upon that spirit. Once you have placed your faith in Christ, your new spirit and fullness of potential in Christ is guaranteed.

Some of God's promises are absolute. They will happen whether or not we believe. An example is the Old Testament promise of sending the Deliverer/Redeemer. The New Testament promise of Jesus' return is another example of a promise of God that requires no action on our part. Other promises are made available to us by our active response—by our satisfying the condition. Salvation is one such promise—we must believe in and receive Jesus as our Personal Savior. Sanctification is another—we must willingly cooperate with the Holy Spirit's instructions.

As stated previously, sanctification is the transforming process of God at work in and through us. For this to happen, we must agree with God's will for us.

Charles H. Kraft, Ph.D., president of Deep Healing Ministries, professor of forty years at the School of Intercultural Studies at Fuller Theological Seminary, helps us understand. In his book *I Give You Authority: Practicing the Authority Jesus Gave Us*, (2012), he writes about our authority in Christ using the story of his own son asking to use his credit card:

“Dad, would you put my name on your credit card?” This request came from my son Rick, who was driving off to college fifteen hundred miles away in an older car. He was concerned lest the car break down and he not have the money to get it back on the road. “You wouldn't want me

to be stranded somewhere without being able to pay the bill, would you?” he continued. “I promise I won’t misuse it.”

His reasoning made sense...though [his mother and I] were a bit apprehensive about whether he would keep his word not to misuse the card... But he is *our son*, our own flesh and blood. And since we were very much in favor of his going to college, we knew that, in addition to paying his tuition, our granting him the use of a credit card made sense. Our names would appear first on the credit card as the ones with the ultimate responsibility. But Rick’s name would appear immediately under our names, giving him authority to spend whatever the credit card company would allow us by way of credit.

When Jesus came to earth, it was as if He carried a credit card from His Father with the Father’s name at the top and His own name under it. Like my son, *Jesus came with all the authority His Father’s name would bring*. He had full authority to spend whatever was in the Father’s account, so long as He kept on good terms with the Father and spent it for purposes of which the Father approved.

As He stated in John 5:30, “I can do nothing on my own authority...I am not trying to do what I want, but only what He who sent me wants.”

Jesus’ power came from being filled with the Holy Spirit, not from His own *Godness*. [He willingly gave up operating entirely from His deity to live the human existence.] The source of His authority, then, was His intimacy with the Father. [His intentional communion with and obedience to

the Father]

Both Jesus and my son Rick knew who they were in relation to the one granting them authority. If we are to operate properly in Jesus' authority, we, too, need to understand who we are in the universe. We need to understand our [new] identity.

Through years of working in inner healing deliverance, I have become convinced that the enemy's primary area of attack is our self-image. *He does not want us to discover who we are.*⁹

We Must Learn to Guard our Mind and Heart

In Hebrews 12:2, we learn that Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. And in Philippians 1:6 we are assured, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ."¹⁰ The day of Jesus Christ refers to His second coming. This is yet another promise from God to assure you what you can expect.

Scriptures also tell us that God is no respecter of persons,¹¹ that each individual is unique with his/her own distinct purpose in God's plan. Therefore, each is endowed with the natural talents and spiritual gifts necessary to accomplish their God-created purpose. Ephesians 2:10 explains, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."¹²

Isaiah 30:18 explains: "Therefore the Lord [earnestly] waits [expecting, looking, and longing] to be gracious to you; and therefore He lifts Himself up, that He may have mercy on you and show loving-kindness to you.... Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are all those who [earnestly] wait for Him, who expect and look and long for Him...." (AMP)

So why don't we see more Christians operating in the fullness of Christ, demonstrating great hope and enjoying personal breakthroughs? Because they have failed to guard their hearts and minds concerning who they truly are in Christ. They have allowed things of this carnal world to infiltrate their thinking, and/or have accepted lies of the enemy, thereby convoluting their faith and rendering their new-creation possibilities ineffective.

We Receive According to What We Believe

As stated earlier, we will receive according to what God finds in our hearts/*leb*, which includes our minds. We will conduct our lives according to what we maintain in our heart and mind. Some claim that those of the *Charismatic* persuasion (a form of Christianity that emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts, and modern-day miracles) operate with emphasis on emotion and that non-Charismatics operate with emphasis on intellect. However, if we fully understand the way God created us and operate consistent with His will, we will operate utilizing both our mind (intellect) and heart (emotions), with wisdom. There are times we cannot trust our heart just as there are times we cannot trust our emotions. Wisdom is the key.

If we are unforgiving, unkind, unloving, or bitter toward others we will receive that which is in our hearts. If we entertain unwholesome thoughts, prideful or inferior thoughts, and the like, we will limit our own progress in the sanctification process. Jeremiah 17:10 reads:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.¹³

Again, the heart/*leb* refers to the soul—the very essence of a person. Remember the soul and the body will follow whatever is most influential. If you live primarily from your earthly desires, your soul and body will follow. If on the other hand you focus on new spiritual desires, your soul and body will follow those.

I shared earlier that I have so struggled with thoughts of being inferior they actually immobilized me and left me floundering under my circumstances. But once I put on my identity and authority in Christ and became more proficient at training my mind by replacing every negative, crippling thought with the life-giving truth of God’s Word, I began to go beyond my self-imposed limitations. Intentional effort is required to first recognize a negative and oppressive thought that is planted in our mind. And deliberate effort is required to cooperate with the Holy Spirit to examine and help us guard our hearts—our *leb*.

Gratefully, we have another promise from God in Ezekiel 11:19:

I will give them one heart [a new heart] and I will put a new spirit within them; and I will take the stony [unnaturally hardened] heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh [sensitive and responsive to the touch of their God]. (AMP)

The Three Realms of our Being

To best take hold of the new identity and authority we have in Christ, we need to understand the realms of our being. As Terri Fivash, author of *Spiritual Toolbox* explains, there are three realms in which humans interact. There are the physical, the mental, and the spiritual realm:

The physical realm is what is normally thought of as the real world. It is the space and things around is, governed

by laws of physics such as gravity, friction and velocity. Anything which can be perceived by sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch is part of this realm.

The mental realm is usually referred to as “mind” in the Bible. It consists of everything that goes on in the mind or that which is part of the mind. This includes thoughts, emotions/feelings, decisions, and the human will. This is also what is called the “soul” by many people.

The spiritual realm is third. The Bible often calls this realm the “heart.” The apostle Paul calls it “the things which are not seen.” He also tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:18 that this realm is the highest reality. “For the things that are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” The unseen is eternal because it emanates directly from God. His simple existence creates this realm. “for God is a spirit,” John 4:24.

The heart can be thought of as that part of you which perceives and communicates with the spiritual realm. If we didn’t have a heart we could not know this part of reality. “even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”¹⁴ (1 Corinthians 2:11-12 KJV)

The Laws of the Realms

Each realm is governed by law. The laws are in continual operation, whether we are aware of their existence or not. We are acquainted with

many of the laws of the physical realm, gravity being one. However, we likely seldom think about them, and yet we use them every day. Science has helped us discover these laws and how to use them to our advantage.

The human brain or the mental realm, also operates by law. Psychology, psychiatry, and neurology are providing a much broader and richer understanding of *mental law*. They are showing how the brain works and what thoughts and memories are.

The ability to spiritually discern matters was given to man at creation. Mankind was created by God in three parts: body, soul, and spirit. Our spirit being is that which allows us to discern spirits and communicate with God. The laws governing the spiritual realm, like all the other realms, operate all the time whether we know or are aware of them or not. Unless we understand the laws of the spiritual realm, we may cause *blessing* or *cursing* upon ourselves. *Blessing* is giving God permission to work in your life. *Cursing* is giving Satan permission to work in your life.¹⁵

As we walk this earth, we cannot avoid operating in all three of these realms and the laws that govern them. When we are ignorant of the laws of the realms, we can be violating laws and bringing harm upon our selves and others without realizing it. Learning about the laws and how to use them is key.

The Connection Among the Realms

The human brain connects all three realms. The electrical processes of the brain can be measured with an electroencephalograph, or EEG machine. There are five major types of brain waves identified by Greek letters: *Gamma*, *Beta*, *Alpha*, *Delta*, and *Theta*. Each type is associated with some part of the body's functions. Since what we think directly impacts us physically we should have some understanding of how the thinking process works.

Gamma waves are the fastest, and the most recently discovered. They signal intensive hyper-activity, such as crisis situations. During this state the brain processes information at an incredible rate, which is why what's happening around the person appears to happen in slow motion. This hyper-mental and physical state is normally entered into only at extreme survival need.

Beta waves are slower than Gamma, [waves] and are dominant when the brain is engaged in an activity that requires attention. We spend most of our waking hours in Beta state. The mind is mentally engaged, whether or not there is physical activity associated with the mental part.

Alpha waves, which are slower than Beta [waves] occur when the brain is relaxed and quite, but not asleep. Repetitive physical activity which does not require thought will often produce Alpha state. It is often described as being “zoned out.”

The slowest brain waves are **Delta waves**, and they are associated with deep sleep/dreaming, and the autonomic systems that keep your body alive. They signal minimal mental and physical activity.

The last type of brain waves are the **Theta waves**. They are slower than Alpha waves, but faster than Delta, and they are associated with the boundary between the conscious and the sub-conscious, that time when you have almost fallen asleep, but not quite. In the Theta state, ideas can flow freely in the mind, inspiration strikes, and the imagination can take over.¹⁶

I've found that very often during this Theta state, I seem to hear the *still small voice* from the Lord best. Perhaps because I'm a type-A personality that is otherwise mentally preoccupied, making hearing the Lord throughout the day more difficult for me. Realizing this is my clue to intentionally take times through the day to quiet my mind and seek the Lord, either with a specific question for Him to answer or just to worship Him. During times of quietude seeking the Lord's presence, I often hear Him speak loving, affirming words, and provide me direction I need.

Terri Fivash continues:

Theta waves beat four times per second in a special rhythm. Anything which beats at this same speed and rhythm will access this part of the mind directly, and the brain will begin to move toward Theta state. You will not have a choice about this. Humans have known of this phenomenon for thousands of years, and the beat is also known as the *Shaman's* beat.¹⁷

A shaman is someone who is believed in some cultures to be able to use magic to cure people who are sick, to control future events, and so on. Some refer to "shamans as medicine men or witch doctors who routinely use this beat to induce trances and hypnotic states. Why? Because this level of brain wave is the door in your mind to the spiritual realm."¹⁸ In reality shamans practice hypnosis. Hypnosis, in my considered opinion, can be very dangerous allowing unwanted spirits access to our thought life. Many claim benefits of hypnotherapy, but I offer stern caution.

Steady beats such as we hear in music impact not only the Theta state—but other brain states are impacted. When we listen to music, the tempo—the number of beats per second, impacts us more than the melody. This reveals yet another principle that we use regularly without any thought.

Consider the low soft beats common to baby's lullabies that are useful in helping to lull children toward Delta state and sleep.

Because Theta waves are the door into your mind from the spiritual realm, both God and Satan can use it. It is the only way in. Any thoughts that come to you *from the spiritual realm* will enter on Theta waves. Alpha, Beta, and of course Gamma waves are faster and "louder" than Theta waves. This means they can easily block perception of the Theta waves.¹⁹

The Spirit, Mind, Body Connection

In a functioning brain, brainwaves including Theta are always present, meaning that the connection to the spiritual realm is always open, regardless of whether we are aware of that connection or not. The *Hypothalamus gland* (a small gland that connects the nervous system with the endocrine system), according to science, is responsible for the mind-body connection.

The hypothalamus operates automatically and will order a response to thoughts we may have ignored. The hypothalamus gland is busy at work with any thought, at any time. The gland makes no judgments about the thought being good or bad, true or false, but will simply respond, instruct the endocrine system, and influence or control every system in the body. Therefore, whoever controls the thoughts in your mind, literally controls you. The job of the hypothalamus gland is to bring the body into agreement with the thought that triggered the action.

If the thought is, "Oh, it's so peaceful out here in the hammock," the hypothalamus will try to bring the body into a state of peace. If the thought is, "I wish I were dead!" the hypothalamus will try to bring the body into a

state of death.

Satan and his kingdom understand this very well, and they know just what thoughts to send to produce any desired effect.

Satan is part of the spiritual realm, and the only way he can connect with the physical realm is through a human mind. Proverbs 23:7 (NKJ) states, “As a man thinks in his heart so is he.”²⁰

Because of the connection between the three realms: spirit, mind, and body; Proverbs 23:7 takes on greater meaning. While we don’t need to understand all the scientific information about our brain waves to effectively live our spiritual life in Christ, understanding how the spiritual realm impacts us through our *mind gate* is essential. The Apostle Paul took a great bit of time and effort explaining that the battle is in our mind.

As stated earlier, Believers in Christ have the potential to overcome the ravages of this world providing we have our new spirit leading our life. Terri Fivash explains the progress of the spirit, mind, and body connection:

In summary, the connection between the three realms begins in the spiritual. Through Theta waves, it moves into the mental realm, and through the hypothalamus gland, it stretches into the physical realm.²¹

Can Satan and Demons Read Our Minds or Implant Thoughts?

The Bible never says directly that Satan cannot know our thoughts or read our minds, but Scripture never shows him reading minds and seems to imply that he can’t. Believers hold differing opinions about how Satan influences our thoughts.

That Satan and his demons would only be able to read our minds and directly implant thoughts if this was an ability God created angels with, makes sense. Remember, Satan and his demons are fallen *angels*. Angels, whether fallen or God-honoring, can wield tremendous power in the physical realm.

While demons can possess the bodies of unbelievers and even speak audibly through them (a physical manifestation), that does not necessarily mean they possess the person's mind, only their physical bodies. Angels exist in the spirit realm and are limited in power and reach in the physical world according to God's instruction and our receptivity.

Certainly, even as Believers, we continue to be influenced by our fallen nature and the schemes of the enemy and his dominions. I believe that Satan hears our words, observes our actions, and always accuses Believers of unrighteousness with the intent of indirectly infiltrating our thought life. Scripture teach that even God does not want control of our thoughts. Rather, He wants us free to choose for ourselves.

In my opinion, every satanic attack and temptation is intended to cause us to reject God. We are responsible for our own thought-life and what we choose to accept and entertain or reject and replace with the truth of God's Word. Following Christ yields abundant life. Succumbing to Satan produces bondage and misery.

Our Thoughts Impact our Physical Existence

Matthew 12:35-37, in the words of Jesus, reads,

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. But I say to you that for every idle

word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Thoughts within our hearts/minds are in reality words that we automatically respond to physically. The words we speak reveal what is in our hearts/mind. By deliberately choosing to speak life-giving words, our own *ear gate* hears our words which in turn impacts our heart/mind and spirit. This is why proactively confessing the truth of God's Word both mentally and audibly is important.

Referring again to the book co-authored by Don Gossett previously cited:

The law of [effective] faith [or the Law of Speaking] is that you confess to yourself that what God says about you is true. We have been instructed in God's Word to "hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for He is faithful that promised)," Hebrews 10:23. As we hold fast to the confession of the Word, we are to "affirm constantly" (Titus 3:8) those things that God has revealed to us.

To hold fast to our confession is to say what God has said over and over again until the thing desired in our hearts and promised in the Word is fully manifested. There is no such thing as possession without confession. When we discover the rights we have in Christ, which are given throughout the Bible, we are to affirm them constantly, testify to them, and witness to these tremendous Bible facts. Therefore, our faith will be effective only as we confess with our mouths all the good things that are ours because we belong to Jesus.

We know that in Jesus Christ we have been given salvation, not just for our souls, but for our bodies—in our health, our finances, our peace of mind, and our freedom from bondage and fear. There are hundreds of powerful affirmations to make constantly as we speak the language of Scripture. For example:

God is who He says He is.

I am who God says I am.

God can do what He says He can do.

I can do what God says I can do.

God has what He says He has.

I have what God says I have.²²

God is the giver of all good and perfect gifts. He longs to lavish upon us more than we can hope or imagine. Praying to ask and thank God for what He has already planned to give us is not wrong. We are asking according to His will, as we're instructed to do in 1 John 5:14-15. Because the enemy is ever roaming about seeking whom he can devour, we need to intentionally maintain life-giving thoughts in our hearts/mind and then they will flow from our lips. Psalm 37:4 instructs us to delight ourselves in the Lord and then He will give us the desires of our heart. If our delight is first and foremost in the Lord then He will give us more of Him. From this we can enjoy the promise of Matthew 6:33. When we seek first the Kingdom of God, God is pleased to give us more than what He already knows we need. He enjoys giving to us in abundance.

Effective Faith Transcends Salvation

The Bible is clear that Jesus did much more than bring people to saving

faith in Him as their Redeemer. He also taught them to live in what I call effective faith. Jesus demonstrated that He was and is the Deliverer whose power and authority makes victory over all that sin brought upon this world possible for us. The intention of the Holy Trinity was that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection would provide a way for humanity to be restored to God *and* have His supernatural victory to enjoy His abundance, beginning in this life, while we live out our earthly existence. God has assured us certain hope and prominent breakthroughs.

Once we learn to make our primary focus our new spirit-self, and we work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to transform us from the inside out—that is to have our new spirit dictate the transformations that take place in our soul and spirit and into our physical world—we will go beyond salvation to sanctification and begin to see the manifestations of the Spirit in and through us. In short, if we conduct ourselves like Jesus we can expect *Jesus results*.

With a better understanding that our hope is in Christ, that resolute belief in God and His Word are essential, and that we must intentionally operate according to our new identity in Christ, let's next consider how we can progress within both the physical and spiritual worlds.

CHAPTER FOUR

Faith Materialized

Operate in the Spiritual

My father was a policeman. He taught me from a young age that *ignorance of the law is no excuse*. Whether I know the laws of the land or not, I will still be held accountable to them. That means if I violate a law, even if I am completely unaware that the law exists, I would still be punished according to the law. I didn't require a high I.Q. to realize that I'd better do all I can to know the law! That principle is no different for us living in the natural and spiritual worlds.

There are laws that govern the existence of our physical world. You are aware of many of them. There are the laws of gravity, the laws of thermodynamics, the laws of aerodynamics, the laws of motion, and so on. Most don't know all the laws of the physical world, but that doesn't make us exempt from them.

Did you know that there are also laws that govern the spiritual world? As a new creation in Christ, your new spirit has access to the holy, spiritual world of God. However, our original bodies and souls remain part of physical world until the last day of our earthly existence. This means that as new creations in Christ we live in two worlds. That we learn the laws of both worlds makes sense, especially in light of our desire for confident hope and personal breakthroughs.

Grasping the Spiritual Laws

In modern day Christian circles, the term *Spiritual Laws* generally refers to what's become known as *The Four Spiritual Laws*. These are the laws or principles that govern our relationship with God. They are:

1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. (John 3:16, John 10:10)
2. Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life. (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23)
3. Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life. (Romans 5:8, 1 Corinthians 15:3-6, John 14:6)
4. We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives. (John 1:12, Ephesians 2:8,9, John 3:1-8, Revelation 3:20)

These laws are essential for one's salvation and the ability to live the victorious life that Christ wants us to live in relationship with Him. From the very beginning, God's will for humanity was for us to have complete authority over all that exists. Genesis 1:26-31 reveals God's plan for mankind. But as we already explored, the free-will choice of the first man and woman ushered sin, and all sin represents, into the world. In response, God gave us His promised Redeemer through the person of Jesus Christ. Because of Jesus, Believers now have access to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in ways unavailable during the Old Testament era.

Understanding the Governing Laws of Both Worlds

The physical things of this world were created by God as patterns to help us discover the spiritual realm. The laws of this physical world, such as gravity or motion, are ever at work. They never cease and they never change. They are constantly affecting what we do and the results that we experience, regardless of whether we think of, or are even aware of, the laws.

All the laws of this physical world are actually scientific systems that we rely upon. God created these physical systems so that we could depend upon and have confidence in them every day. You may or may not understand how these laws work, but you can have faith in them and use them to your advantage or your harm, depending on your actions. For example, if you want to travel from California to New York you can choose to fly on a commercial plane. You board the plane with confidence that the laws of aerodynamics will allow the pilot to override the laws of gravity and, with the laws of thrust and motion, power the plane to take off so that you land in New York within a few hours. You may not consciously consider the use of the physical laws, but you rely on them just the same. Conversely, if you jump off a cliff without the aid of a glider or a parachute, because of the law of gravity, you will soon find yourself hitting the ground hard, likely with a great deal of bodily harm if not death.

The law of gravity never ceases to exist. Yet when other laws are utilized, gravity is overcome sufficiently to allow planes to take off, then later safely land. As individuals we may not know or even think about all the laws at work allowing us to board a plane and fly to our destination. Rather, we count on the education and efforts of others who have studied the laws, while we enjoy the benefits of their application of those physical laws.

We can rely upon the physical laws of this world without *personally* understanding them, and expect them to bring us benefit. Simultaneously, there are actions we could take that can bring us harm because we are personally ignorant of, or we willfully defy, the physical laws. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

The same is true of spiritual laws. The laws exist and continue to operate whether we are aware of them or not. They can bring us benefit or harm depending upon our actions and the specific combination or use of the laws.

We can't expect God to bless and protect us if we abuse His physical laws. When Satan suggested that Jesus throw Himself down from the precipice to demonstrate He was in the care of God the Father, Jesus replied, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"¹ Jesus' response demonstrated awareness and wisdom to not abuse God's physical laws.

The laws of this physical world govern us in the physical realm only. However, the laws of the spiritual world govern us and have impact on both the spiritual and the physical worlds. Again, the physical and spiritual worlds co-exist. This brings us to next consider the sovereignty of God.

God's Sovereign Control

Although God is all powerful, He has chosen to impose limitations and constraints upon Himself. One such self-imposed limitation is *free-will*. God gave His created beings free-will decision-making capabilities. Both His created angelic beings and human beings were given free-will. A more complete discussion of free-will is provided in the first book in this series, *Examine Your Faith! Finding Truth in a World of Lies*. But the shorter consideration for the purposes of this book's chapter is, that by angels and

humanity having free-will, we have complete control over the decision to worship God or not. God does not impose Himself or His ways on anyone.

As previously discussed, there is an enemy of God, but understand there is no equal to God. The struggle of good and evil we see playing out in this world is not evidence of two entities equal in power striving with each other. If that were the case the fight would continue forever. However, God is the supreme power over all and, as such, He is working His plan to ultimately completely overcome evil.

People ask “If God is sovereign over all, why doesn’t He either remove us from this fallen world when we embrace Christ as our Savior, or eliminate from this world all the vile sicknesses, death, suffering, and evil?” Naturally no one wants to suffer. With that in mind the question is understandable. However the question is asked without an understanding of God’s plan that is already in motion to eradicate evil.

First, God is sovereign over all, but that does not make Him responsible for all. The free-will that angels and humans have—that is the power of independent reason and will—allows choice regarding relationship with God or not. Because of the free-will of mankind, Adam and Eve were able to reject God’s authority and usher into this world all the ravages of sin.

Second, God is in the process of eradicating all sin from this world, one person’s free-will choice at a time. God does not desire that anyone should perish. 2 Peter 3:9 reads, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”² Clearly through God’s personal sacrifice in the person of Jesus, He has demonstrated His great love and desire for all to be reconciled to Himself; and by Christ’s bodily resurrection, He has won the victory over all sin and death. What we are living out is the *fullness of time*, predetermined by God, allowing for all of His

creation, including those not yet physically born, to have the chance of reconciliation through faith in Christ.

Third, we who willfully receive Christ remain on this earth with the privilege of partnering with God to overcome evil. We are to partner with Him to bring His kingdom authority to reign and rule on earth as He does in heaven. This is God's plan. If His plan is not apparent to us now, God still has not failed to do His part. Rather, Christians have failed in understanding and doing our part. This provides yet another reason for us to better understand spiritual laws so that we can impact the physical world in cooperation with God, for our benefit and the benefit of many!

Application of Spiritual Laws

Spiritual laws and principles, like physical laws and principles, operate continuously. Spiritual laws and principles are used by both God and Satan. People have access to these laws; however, due to ignorance and deception, we have failed to make full use of them.

From their new spirit, Believers in Christ have the authority to call on God's holy, spiritual laws to impact the physical world and bring God's kingdom rule on earth. Conversely, those who are not redeemed through faith in Christ, whose natural-born spirit is at enmity with God, can (and automatically do from ignorance and apathy), partner with Satan and his demons to further his cause.

As we live in this physical world, even as Believers, we easily allow this physical life to be our focus. This, sadly, is how many Believers live. As a new Creature in Christ living carnally—that is, with our primary emphasis on the things of this world—we set up a conflict and tension between the spirit, soul, and body. Carnal Believers have not learned how to live out of their new spirit-self. As a result they look, act, and experience life as an

unbeliever, but with even more internal tension since the new spirit and the ways of this world are in opposition to one another.

Believers who seek to learn how to live according to their new spirit-self are those who are able to appropriate God's promises for victorious living even in this fallen world. Believers who understand that learning about God's kingdom is a life-long process, as opposed to a single lesson, are the ones who enjoy confident hope and demonstrate effective faith in ever increasing measure.

If we understand that the spiritual realm is the highest eternal reality, and that that realm has power to impact the physical world, then we would be smart to have a solid understanding of the laws of the spiritual world. As previously discussed, God has made all that exists. Everything we see and experience in the natural is intended by God to help us discover and understand the spiritual.

God's Spiritual Laws

First, let's consider the *Law of Sin and Death*. After God created the first man, Adam, from the dust of the earth, He clearly told Adam that if Adam chose his own way instead of the way of God, he would die. In Genesis 2:16-17, God told Adam that he could eat from all the trees in the garden, except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God clearly stated that if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. Despite God's warning, Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Immediately the spirit within them became estranged from God. Their rejection of God's commandment resulted in every human being born after them inheriting the same spiritually dead condition. This is the Law of Sin and Death and an explanation of how the law entered the world. The power of free-will clearly has ability to bring about life or death.

Next, let's consider the *Law of Life*. Immediately upon Adam's acknowledgement of his rebellion, God promised to send a Redeemer, Whom we know came in the person of Jesus. Through Jesus' sinless life, sacrificial death, and resurrection, God offers the only way for life to be restored to anyone who wants to be restored unto Him. Romans 8:2 reads, "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death."³

In order for the Law of Life to produce new life, the old life must die and be done away with. Christ's death makes this possible for us by faith. In John 12:23-26, Jesus proclaimed the Law of Life from His own death:

And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."⁴

This brings us to the *Law of Faith*, with its history in another set of laws often referred to as *the Law of Moses* or simply *the Law*. Both terms refer to the compilation of decrees found in the first five books of the Old Testament, summed up in the *Ten Commandments*. Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, those who apply the Law of Faith are set free from the Old Testament Law because that law was *fulfilled* in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus declares, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."⁵ Because Christ fulfilled the Law of Sin and Death, we are no longer bound by the Law of the Old Testament. Instead,

by faith, we enter into God's grace allowing us to be *justified*, as though we personally fulfilled the Law, because our faith is in Christ—the only one to ever fulfill the Law.

Romans 3:27 explains, “Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.”⁶ By faith in Christ, we are set free from the Law of Sin and Death, whereby we enter into truth and God's grace. In John 1:17 we learn, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”⁷

The *Law of Permission* or *Authority* is our next consideration. The first book of the Old Testament explains that God gave this world to man to rule. Genesis 1:26 explains, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”⁸ Recall that Satan had been banned to this earth at some point in time.

When God gave this world to Adam and Eve to rule, they were also intended to rule over Satan. This is the Law of Permission or Authority. But when Adam and Eve chose to be influenced by Satan rather than God, they, in effect, obeyed Satan. By abdicating their God-given authority, and rejecting God's authority, they positioned Satan as ruler of this world. However, Christ's death on the cross redeemed those who believe, restoring access of authority to humanity in keeping with God's original intent. Again gleaned from Terri Fivash, author of *Spiritual Toolbox*:

Because He knew that “the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29 NIV), Jesus gave the world and the [God-given] responsibility [to rule over it] back to us. He assigned us a task when He returned to heaven (Mark 13:34)—the job of reconciling the world to Him

again, (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). [We are equipped for this] job here on earth, and God is not going to do it for us. We are to further the interests of God's kingdom in this earth. Because of the Law of Authority, when we see Satan and his kingdom working on earth, we can shut the door on him, and open it to God."⁹

Next, let's consider the *Law of Sowing and Reaping*, also referred to as the *Law of Multiplication*. Galatians 6:7-8 informs us, "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."¹⁰ This law explains how a person who may have a new spirit through faith in Christ can still reap corruption by conduct that *feeds the flesh* instead feeding the spirit.

With the Parable of the Sower in Matthew 13, Jesus explains the *heart of man*. The heart of man, as intended in this passage, is derived from the Hebrew perspective of the heart. As considered in Chapter One, the Hebrew word for heart is *leb*. *Leb* means the unique essence of the individual soul (mind/intellect/will, heart/emotions, and distinct personality).

Matthew 13:23 reads:

As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.¹¹

In the very next parable, Jesus says the same thing but adds the sly activity of the enemy when we're not tending or guarding our hearts:

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared also. And the servants of the master of the house came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have weeds?' He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' So the servants said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?'¹²

What we need to understand here is that the Law of Reaping and Sowing means that whatever is placed in the ground/heart will increase and multiply whether the insertion is good or bad. Whatever is sown in a person's heart, if allowed to remain and grow, will find expression in the actions of that person. Who put the seeds there doesn't matter, or whether the person wanted them there. If they are not intentionally removed, they will eventually manifest in that person in a physical way. The only way a harvest is reaped, good or bad, is after sowing and growing are done.

God's first command to mankind was to be fruitful and multiply. (Genesis 1:28) Once Adam and Eve chose their own way instead of God's way, sin was planted in their hearts. Sin is the *fruit* that grew and multiplied in the human race and this world as a result.

Lastly, concerning the Law of Sowing and Reaping, consider that God loves a cheerful giver. "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."¹³

The *Law of Speaking* is another law we need to know. Spoken words are the way the physical and spiritual realms interact. Romans 10:17 states: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."¹⁴ *The*

word of Christ, implies the whole counsel of God. While I've been very familiar with that passage for many years, the phrase *by the word of God* took on more powerful meaning once I understood that words, either spoken or written, *not just God's, but ours too*, are the way the spiritual realm interacts with the physical realm. How important that everything we speak is in alignment with the Word of God!

Consider again Christ's temptation by the Devil. Immediately after Jesus was declared the Son of God and Savior of the World,¹⁵ Jesus was tempted for forty days. Remember that Jesus, Who was wholly God and wholly Man, did not operate His earthly existence with any measure of His divinity. He laid that down entirely to live the human experience. Each time the enemy tried to entice Jesus to reject God, Jesus responded by quoting the very Word of God—the very same Scriptures that we have today as confirmed by the Dead Sea Scrolls. Christ's awareness of God's Word, and faith in God Himself, allowed Him to overcome the temptation of the enemy. And the same principle applies for us.

Proverbs 18:21, from the Amplified Bible, states that “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].” God takes the power of our words very seriously. Matthew 12:36 reveals that we will be required to give account for every careless word we speak.

Now, let's consider what some have called the *Law of Supply*. This law operates very differently in God's kingdom than in the physical world. Again quoting Terri Fivash from her book *Spiritual Toolbox*:

In God's kingdom, the more you use, the more you have.
The less you use, the less you have. If you use it all, you've used none of it, and if you don't use any of it, you've used it all. The Law of Supply is based on the limitless, inexhaustible resources of God. With God, there will

always be more. The story of the poor widow in 2 Kings 4:1-7 illustrates the way God's supply works. The widow's sons were about to be sold to pay the debt she owed a creditor, and all she had in the house was a cruse [earthen pot] of oil. The prophet Elisha told her to gather a lot of empty pots and start pouring oil. [As she did] the oil ceased flowing only when the widow ceased pouring. As long as the widow poured, the oil flowed. There was always more.¹⁶

The Supreme Laws Are Found in the Attributes of God

One of the most influential studies I've ever done was learning the attributes of God. These are His absolute and unparalleled characteristics. Because God is Spirit and the Creator of all that exists, all creation is subject to His being. Like the laws of the physical world or the laws of the spiritual world, whether we know about Him or not, He still exists, continually operates, and we are subject to His realities.

The single most important attribute of God, in my estimation, is the fact that He is *immutable*. That is, He cannot change. As Believers in Christ, when we understand the magnificent attributes of God and realize that in *all His ways* He cannot ever change, we can possess a confidence and a peace that is otherwise not available—not anywhere or from any other source. Although this list is not exhaustive, consider and allow yourself to meditate on the attributes of God listed here. God is:

A personal Spirit: I can have intimate fellowship with Him: "I reach out for You. I thirst for You as parched land thirsts for rain." (Psalm 143:6 NLT)

Omnipotent—All powerful: He can help me with anything: "O Sovereign

LORD! You have made the heavens and earth by Your great power. Nothing is too hard for you!” (Jeremiah 32:17 NLT)

Omnipresent—Everywhere present: He is always with me: “Where can I go from Your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, You are there; if I make my bed in the depths, You are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there Your hand will guide me, Your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to You; the night will shine like day, for darkness is as light to You.” (Psalms 139:1-12 NLT)

Omniscient—All knowing: I will go with Him with all my questions and concerns: “He determines the course of the world events; He removes kings and sets others on the throne. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the scholars.” (Daniel 2:21 NLT)

Sovereign—In control over all: I can count on His will being done: “All the people of the earth are nothing compared to Him. He has the power to do as He pleases among the angels of heaven and with those who live on earth. No one can stop Him or challenge Him, saying, ‘What do You mean by doing these things?’” (Daniel 4:35 NLT)

Holy—Total purity—incorruptible and separate from all the rest of creation: As His child, I can draw from His moral purity: “So obey God because you are His children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of doing evil; you didn’t know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God—who chose you to be His children—is holy. For He Himself has said, *You must be holy because I am holy.*” (1 Peter 1:14-16 NLT)

All Righteous—His goodness and holiness are demonstrated by His works: I will live by His standards: “Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.

You must display a new nature because you are a new person created in God's likeness—righteous, holy, and true.” (Ephesians 4:2-24 NLT)

All Just—The ultimate judge over the lives and actions of all beings: He will always treat me fairly: “For we must all stand before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in our bodies.” (2 Corinthians 5:10 NLT)

All Love—Unconditional true love, extended to all: He is unconditionally committed to my well-being: “Can anything ever separate us from Christ's love? Does it mean [H]e no longer loves us if we have trouble or calamity, or are persecuted, or hungry, or destitute, or in danger, or threatened with death? No, despite all these things, overwhelming victory is ours through Christ, who loved us. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:35, 37-39 NLT)

All Merciful—Forgiving, compassionate, forbearing, withholding judgment to extend His benefit: He forgives me of my sins when I sincerely confess them. “Have mercy on me O God, because of Your unfailing love. Because of Your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me. Do not banish me from Your presence, and don't take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me again the joy of Your salvation, and make me willing to obey You.” (Psalm 51:1-12 NLT condensed)

Ever Faithful—Consistently at work to fulfill His plan: I will trust Him always to keep His promises. “Remember that the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He

will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it." (1 Corinthians 10:13 NLT)

All Truth—Utterly unable to lie: As He is the source of all truth, I can trust God alone implicitly: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17 NLT)

Imminent—Ever at hand: I have confidence that God is continually at work in my life: "He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:27-28 NLT)

Immutable—Unable to change His mind, His characteristics, His plan: My future is secure and eternal. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." (James 1:17 NLT)¹⁷

There is no other like Him.

Relating with God

Hopefully you've realized that Believers are uniquely able to operate in the physical world and to tap into all the benefits of God's spiritual world. In order to do this, you must first become a Believer in Jesus by faith. Then, you can enter into personal relationship with God. As with any relationship, you need to get acquainted first, and then grow and mature your relationship. As you build relationship, you become more intimately involved with God, and the level of trust and commitment is increased. Relationships are established and built based on heart to heart communications.

Dr. Charles Stanley of In Touch Ministries explains:

Communication that builds relationships is dialogue.

Genuine prayer has all of the qualities and characteristics of

a deeply meaningful conversation between two people. God said to the prophet Isaiah, “Come now, and let us reason together.” (Isaiah 1:18) This image of God and man sitting down together for a good talk is our best image of prayer.

When we have a deep and heartfelt conversation with another person, we very often come away from that experience saying, “I have a much better understanding of him and his problems, needs, and concerns.

The same is true when we communicate intentionally with God. We know Him more fully, understand Him better, feel more at home in His presence, find cause to praise Him more, and have a deeper relationship with Him.

Prayer is the key to a relationship with God. Intentional dialogue with God ultimately establishes and deepens our relationship with Him. The purpose of prayer is that we might know God better, experience more of His love, and have an abiding awareness of His work in our lives. Talking to God doesn’t build relationship. Communicating with God does—both speaking and listening.

Because prayer is intensely personal, there are no universal formulas. The specifics of your prayer relationship with God are as distinctive as any other aspect of your life and your ability to communicate.¹⁸

We are assured from God’s Written Word that if we ask anything according to His will, we will receive our requests. A key point then is to know God’s general will as expressed in the Bible as well as His specific will for our individual lives. We learn His specific will through communing and

relationship with Him, just as Jesus exemplified.

With the character, will, and intentions of God and His attributes known, you can confidently know that He will never fail you. He has only your best in mind at all times. This doesn't mean you will never suffer. As long as we live in this fallen world, we are subject to the ravages of sin. However, when you suffer, you have the distinct ability to call on God and His promises to be manifest in your life.

Remember, to access anything involves a four-step process:

1. Understanding – to learn and gain knowledge/vision.
2. Accepting – to personally acknowledge as truth.
3. Believing – to stand, rely upon, trust and expect.
4. Receiving – to personally obtain.

We will grow in our understanding according to the effort we make to know God. As defined in Chapter One, the Hebrew word *yada* means to know God intimately and experientially. We express our acceptance of God by first acknowledging Him, then believing in Him, which is to trust Him. Once we've accomplished those three things, we are in position to receive from Him.

Receiving From God

With all conditions met to receive God's promises, we can enter into *prayers of supplication*, which is the effort of asking Him earnestly, humbly, and expectantly. When we have a situation where we want or need God's intervention, we go to Him in prayer and present the problem or desire. Then we listen, watch, and wait. God may reveal His solution to the matter during your prayer time or afterwards. He may impress you Spirit to spirit, He may reveal His answer through the unfolding of circumstances or

through interactions with other people, or in some other way. God is continually communicating with us in a variety of ways. We must train our spirit to discern and hear from God's Spirit.

Once we understand or *see* what God has revealed as the solution, then we need to thank Him for His response and by faith believe for His answer as though our request has already been fully established. This is precisely what Natalie Valcarcel did, as revealed in her testimony in Chapter Two. This is entirely different from what has been called the *Word Faith* or *Name it Claim It* movement. We do not identify what we want then expect God to always give our desires to us. This expectation woefully displaces God and is a gross abuse of faith. Faith must be in Christ, not in faith itself. Faith is not a force as some believe. On the contrary, following Jesus' example, we commune with God to learn what He wants to do in any given situation. I explain His actions this way, "When God names it, we are foolish not to claim it." When we are in personal relationship with God, then He reveals His plans—His will.

Proverbs 29:18 reads, "Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint" [or the people are discouraged].¹⁹ *Prophetic vision* speaks of God-inspired vision. Hosea 4:6 reads, "My people are destroyed for lack of *knowledge*; because you have rejected *knowledge*, I reject you from being a priest to me."²⁰ [Emphasis added] Knowledge refers to knowledge about and from God. When we are confident about God's will for any matter, believing His will is as good as done demonstrates faith. Hebrews 1:1 states, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."²¹ Trusting God for His Word—His promises—to be fulfilled before they are, is acting on faith.

Some teach that visualizing a matter is essential *in order* for what we're believing for to come to fruition. This concept is taught in the Word Faith movement, New Age teaching, secular leadership (i.e. Napoleon Hill,

author of *Think and Grow Rich*), and many occult practices and has found its way into the church. I urge great caution here.

While to imagine a thing like an artist imagines his finished painting before his work is completed is within proper realms of visualization, attempting to give power for the existence of something by our own visualization is not. Depending upon how one is using imagination or visualization, we can move into dangerous territory. If visualization is taught as a technique for creating an image in your mind and using that [image as] an effort to *create or control* reality through mind-powers, you enter the realm of sorcery and divination.²² Jeremiah 23:16-18 states: “Thus says the LORD of hosts: “Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes. They speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD.”²³

If a vision is given by the Lord, that’s another matter. The Lord can give us a vision. But a vision is not something we create on our own. We can ask the Lord to give us a vision concerning a particular matter to help us *see* what He wants us to receive. By envisioning those things God has revealed or that God says is true, we align our soul (mind, will, emotions) with our spirit that is being led by the Holy Spirit. This kind of imagination or visualizing can actually be exceedingly helpful in attaining what God wants us to have. Remember the process is 1. Understand; 2. Accept; 3. Believe; then 4. Receive. Imagining a matter that God has promised *as being done* before it is fulfilled, is faith that pleases God. When we confidently proclaim that God will do what He says He will do, or that we are who God says we are, we are in agreement with God’s truth, which removes hindrances from God’s working power.

Again we need to carefully choose the thoughts we think, whether in words or mental images, and the words we speak. We want to refrain from any perspective that negates the promises and provisions of God. If we are

operating from fear and doubt or any measure of unbelief in God's revealed truth, we negate fulfillment of His promises. When we think, *God is not near me*, or *God doesn't care*, or other such thoughts that oppose God's revealed truth, we harbor deception in our heart, which will prevent our receiving what God wants us to have.

If God provides a promise for a particular outcome, keeping that promise in your mind's-eye, envisioning the outcome in the same way you envision a goal you want to accomplish—imagining what things will be like when the goal's met—this is healthy and can actually help you persevere through opposition. Understand, however, that when God fulfills His promise the fulfillment is often not as we imagined, but can be far greater. According to Ephesians 3:20, God is able to do far more than we could ever ask or imagine.

Hebrews 11:6 assures us that when we come to God believing that He is, meaning that He is who He claims to be and He can do what He says He will do, that we will receive what we ask for when we ask according to His will—not our own imaginations. 1 John. 5:14-15, “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we as anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”²⁴

Now that we've established a basic understanding of the Conditions of Faith, we'll move into how to develop our faith in the chapters of the next Section.

PART TWO

DEVELOPING FAITH

Faith is a gift from God likened to a mustard seed—among the tiniest of seeds but able to grow to enormous proportions and provide benefit for many creatures. As a seed must be nurtured and maintained under proper conditions to grow, so must our faith in order to mature and become enormously effective. Our response in times of opposition will either develop or diminish our faith. This section helps you learn how to best develop your faith.

About the Author

Pamela Christian's ministry began in the early 1990s as a Teaching Director for Community Bible Study, an independent, interdenominational, international organization. This was followed by invitations to speak across the country for various organizations, which she continues to enjoy with great enthusiasm to this day. Her initial writing work included the development of workbooks for her retreats and conferences. This soon expanded to publication in book compilations, magazines and several e-books.

Her speaking and writing career translated perfectly into other media, including hosting talk shows on Christian radio, television, and voice-over work. Pamela earned a certificate in apologetics from Biola University. Her first passion is to help others in matters of faith. Her favorite pastimes are food, family, and friends. Weekends when she's not speaking or writing, you'll find her cooking and entertaining—expressing her second passion for food, wine, and travel. Pam is a member of International Society of Women in Apologetics, and other professional organizations.

Pam and her husband live in Orange County, CA, with their two grown children and families living nearby. To book Pam to speak or learn more visit www.pamelachristianministries.com

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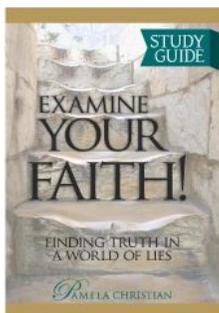
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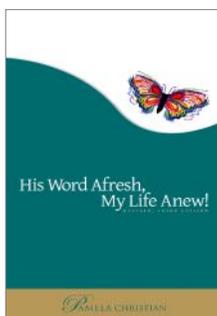
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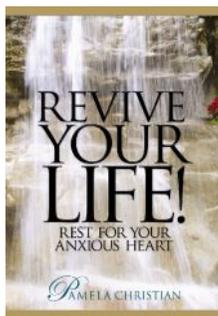
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