

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

**PRIDE:
IT'S ALL ABOUT ME**

SIN FAMILY #1

PRIDE

CONCEIT
SELFISH
AMBITION
IMPATIENCE
VANITY
OFF
SHOWING
SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS
BOASTING

BILL BRIGHT & HENRY BRANDT

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

*Experience
True Healing and Freedom*

BILL Bright & Henry Brandt

Foreword by Tim LaHaye

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He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

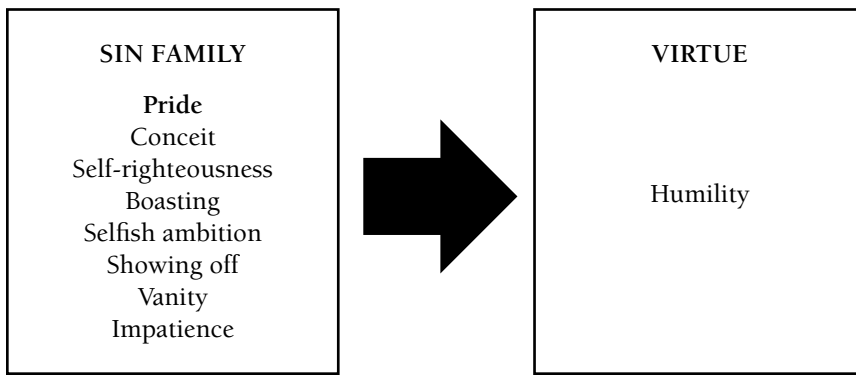
—Psalm 147:3 NIV

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PRIDE: IT'S ALL ABOUT ME



It is no accident that we start our tour of the sin families with the sin of pride. In some sense, pride is the foundational sin. As Bible commentator William Barclay declared, “Pride is the ground in which all the other sins grow, and the parent from which all the other sins come.” With pride, we can justify any other form of rebellion against God’s commands.

Pride may also have literally been the first sin to pollute God’s creation. Many a theologian has speculated that what caused the angel Lucifer to rebel against God was pride—he would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven.¹ We thus follow the Devil’s

well-worn path into sin when we put our thoughts, feelings, and desires ahead of serving God.

And how easy it is to slip into pride!

As a young man in college and later in business, I (Bill) used to be proud of what I could do on my own. I believed that a man could do just about anything he wanted to do through his own effort, if he were willing to pay the price in hard work and sacrifice.

Then, when I became a Christian, the Bible introduced me to a different philosophy of life—a life of trusting God. It took me a while to see the inadequacy of trying to serve God in my own strength and ability, but that new life of faith in God finally replaced my old life of pride.

Others who are struggling with pride have the same opportunity to overcome this sin that I had and replace it with its opposing virtue, humility. We will shortly learn more about how to do just that. However, first we must find out how to distinguish between sinful pride and justifiable pride.

WHAT NUMBER IS YOUR PRIDE?

If a woman is pleased with herself because she received a promotion at work, is that kind of pride wrong?

And what about a father who is proud of his son when the boy makes the varsity football team? Is there anything ungodly about that?

While calling pride “the great sin,” C.S. Lewis, nevertheless, assured his readers that pleasure in being praised is not pride. Nor, he said, is there anything wrong in being proud of the accomplishments of someone dear to you (as long as you do not give yourself airs as a result).² Even the apostle Paul said to some of his spiritual children, “I have the highest confidence in you” (2 Corinthians 7:4). Thus not everything that goes by the name of pride is wrong.

But a pridefulness that causes someone to think more highly of himself or herself than is justified by the facts crosses the line—it becomes sinful. Certainly, any pride that ignores God, taking credit for His gifts, is to be condemned. The same goes for any pride that elevates one person by pressing another down.

Along these same lines, Frederica Mathewes-Green has distinguished between what she calls “Pride One” and “Pride Two.” According to her, Pride One is a narcissism that constantly compares itself with others. She says, “Pride One is always asking anxiously, Am I smarter than they are? Richer? Better-looking?”

Pride Two, meanwhile, is “more akin to confidence.” It is “a quiet, centered pride that is compatible with modesty because it doesn’t have a fretful need to show off.” It grows out of a realistic appraisal of one’s God-given gifts and cultivated abilities.

We should seek and encourage Pride Two, but at the same time we must remember that we are susceptible to Pride One. “This is why we need a Savior,” concludes Mathewes-Green. “We look so nice on the outside, but in the caverns of the heart vicious Pride is always brooding, ready to spring.”³

This sort of “vicious” or sinful pride is what we are concerned with in this chapter. And as with other parent sins, we have to recognize that pride does not stand alone. It is at the head of a family of sins related to a puffed-up ego. Together, they make up a dark rainbow of character qualities that are devilish rather than godly.

These sins of the ego fall into two larger categories: those involved when we think too highly of ourselves and those involved when we choose to act on our unrealistic self-evaluation.

ME, MARVELOUS ME

At least three key terms define the tendency of a person to think he or she is more wonderful than the next person. They are the terms *conceit*, *vanity*, and *self-righteousness*. Can you recognize your own attitude in any of these terms?

Conceit is an excessive appreciation of one’s own value or significance. Another word for it is *arrogance*. Ashleigh Brilliant once said, “All I ask of life is a constant and exaggerated sense of my own importance.” That expresses the essence of conceit.

Is human conceit acceptable in God’s eyes?

On one occasion Paul wrote, “Don’t be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don’t think you know it all!” (Romans 12:16). On another occasion he wrote, “Let us

Are You Proud?

The following self-evaluation quiz will help you determine whether you have a tendency toward pride.

- Do you spend more time thinking about yourself than about God or about other people?
- Do you make yourself the center of most conversations?
- Do you compare yourself with others often, judging yourself favorably?
- Do you take credit for your own looks, intelligence, or ability?
- Do you try to make sure that others are aware of your personal gifts or possessions?
- Do you think you deserve more of this world’s good things than other people do?
- Are you willing to pursue your selfish goals even if it means others are hurt in the process?
- Do you think God must be pleased with you because of how ethical or religious you are?
- Do you ever think you do not really need God or other people?

not become conceited” (Galatians 5:26). God’s view of conceit could hardly come through any clearer than that.

Such conceit may take many different forms. One of these forms is vanity, or thinking highly of one’s appearance.

The foolishness of this type of pride should become apparent as soon as we really think about it. After all, who among us can take credit for how we look? God gives us our appearance through our genes. At most, we can maximize our appearance through diet, exercise, clothing, makeup, and the like. Even then, in time, our looks are destined to fade.

The apostle Peter told women of his day, “Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes” (1 Peter 3:3).⁴ Women—and men—in our day could use the same advice. If we are good-looking, we can be thankful to God for it. But, we should never take our looks as grounds for pride.

While vanity is pride about one’s outward appearance, self-righteousness is pride about one’s inner being, that is, thinking highly of one’s own goodness or spiritual standing. This is a sin that religious people are particularly prone to—and it is a serious one. C. S. Lewis said,

There are two things inside me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worst of the two. That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, it is better to be neither.⁵

Self-righteousness was exemplified by the Pharisees of Jesus’ day, who thought they made themselves acceptable to God through their pious deeds. Jesus once told a story about a Pharisee to a group who “had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else.” The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: “I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m

certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give You a tenth of my income” (Luke 18:9, 11–12).

This attitude of self-righteousness is alive and well in the twenty-first century. When we are self-righteous, we are both the judge and the accused—and we declare ourselves not guilty. We think God must love us because of all the ways we appear religious or moral on the outside.

Sadly, the self-righteous ignore the truth that none of us possesses any righteousness apart from the grace of God. For this reason, it was not the Pharisee in Jesus’ story but rather a repentant tax collector who found favor with God. “I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Luke 18:14).

None of us has justification for conceit, “spiritual” or otherwise. As the great preacher of the nineteenth century Charles Spurgeon said, “Be not proud of race, face, place, or grace.”

When we are self-righteous, we are both the judge and the accused—and we declare ourselves not guilty.

LOOK HERE

If you are conceited, vain, or self-righteous, you probably want others to know how great you are. There are different ways you can do that. Three key terms for these strategies are *boasting*, *showing off*, and *selfish ambition*.

Boasting may come in an obvious form, or it may be more subtle. If someone openly proclaims to you how much money he is making, there is no mistaking what is going on. The more sly boasters have perfected the art of dropping names and letting slip what they have accomplished or purchased or experienced. But this artfulness is really no different from more transparent forms of boasting; it is all meant to impress. Scripture takes a realistic view of boasting. “When people commend themselves, it doesn’t count for much” (2 Corinthians 10:18).

We are told in God’s Word that if we want to boast, we should learn to boast about the right thing. “This is what the LORD says: ‘Don’t let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches. But those who wish

to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23–24).

But in addition to attracting attention to oneself with words, a person can do the same through actions. That’s showing off.

Showing off may be pardonable in children. Every parent has heard a child cry, “Look at me!” and has indulged her by watching as she performs a cartwheel or him as he rides by on his two-wheeler. However with grown-ups, showing off is not so cute.

What is displaying one’s intellect except showing off? What is clowning around so that the attention stays riveted on you? What is making sure others see your new car or fancy clothes? All this is the equivalent of calling out to the world, “Look at me!”

Is this acceptable behavior in God’s eyes? Hardly. “Don’t try to impress others,” He instructs us (Philippians 2:3).

Also, we are not to let selfish ambition determine how we live our lives. Certain types of ambition might be good, such as striving to do well at work in order to be able to provide for your family better. But *selfish* ambition is the single-minded pursuit of what you think you deserve, regardless of what it might cost others.

The man who becomes a workaholic because he wants others to see him as a success, even though the overwork makes him a stranger to his family, is selfishly ambitious.

The church member who pursues a leadership position on a church committee because of the prestige it carries, not out of a desire to serve, is selfishly ambitious.

Our society applauds hard-charging, “self-made” men and women. But if that go-getter quality is actually an expression of selfish ambition, it is foolish and ungodly.

If...you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don’t cover up the truth with boasting and lying. For jealousy and selfishness are not God’s kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.

—James 3:14–16

Those who are selfishly ambitious often display another quality of pride: impatience.

CLOCK CONTROL

One time your two authors were running late for a joint speaking engagement at a church. I (Bill) was driving, and I was exceeding the speed limit by several miles per hour in an attempt to get to the event location on time. It was wrong and I knew better, but I did it anyway.

Sure enough, I soon saw flashing lights in my rearview mirror and heard a siren approaching from behind. The process of pulling over and receiving a ticket took up more time than I would have saved by speeding all the way to the church. (The good news is that I got a chance to speak about Christ to the officer—though I would not recommend breaking the law to gain an opportunity to witness!)

When we are feeling prideful, we think we have the right to control our schedule, even if it means breaking the rules or making life harder for others. That is what I was doing when I was speeding, and it is what many of us do when we are concerned about our efficient use of time to the exclusion of all other concerns.

Working hard and trying to be a good steward of our time is one thing. After all, we are to “make the most of our time” (Psalm 90:12) and “make the most of every opportunity” (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5). But rushing and pushing as if our scheduling preference is what matters most is another thing altogether.

The Old Testament patriarch Abraham got impatient when God seemed lax in fulfilling His promise to give Abraham a son. When Abraham’s wife, Sarah, suggested that he have a child with her maid, Hagar, Abraham agreed. (See Genesis 16.) He and Hagar indeed did have a son, Ishmael, but this boy was not the fulfillment of God’s promise. Years later, God had to tell Abraham, “As for Ishmael, I will bless him. . . . But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year” (Genesis 17:20–21).

We cannot rush God. We cannot control all the events in our lives. We must not forget that others might be trampled in our

pursuit of our own timing for events. Therefore, we should not get restless and impatient. Of course, we need to be faithful and diligent, but at the same time we can be resting in the fact that God is in charge of the times and seasons of our lives.

If our pride is expressed in impatience or in any other way, we need to face up to what we are really doing and why and what it will cost us.

THE PRICE OF PRIDE

Just as pride's expressions are diverse, so are its causes.

Some people are born into privilege or were blessed by God with great physical beauty or other outstanding attributes. The flattery they receive can easily go to their heads.

Other people buy in to cultural messages saying that pride is good. When singers or pop psychologists or others urge them to put themselves first, they take it literally.

Still other people have a poor self-image that—paradoxically—expresses itself as pride. They are trying to make themselves feel better by getting strokes for their ego. (Believe it or not, it is possible to be arrogant and insecure at the same time.)

Given all this, we do not want to oversimplify our conception of pride. But at the same time we want to be firm in saying that wrong types of pride are all alike in being sinful. In the words of the sixth-century desert ascetic John Climacus, "Pride is utter poverty of soul disguised as riches, imaginary light where in fact there is darkness. This abominable vice not only stops our progress but even tosses us down from the heights we have reached." The sin of pride is disgraceful to the proud person, harmful to others, and dishonoring to God.

Through pride, we disgrace ourselves. In an often quoted (or misquoted) proverb, Scripture says, "Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall" (Proverbs 16:18). If we present ourselves as greater than we are, we run the risk of looking foolish when our real nature begins to show itself. In fact, it is only a matter of time before we "fall" in this way.

In 1963 the writer John Steinbeck was in Russia and, feeling confident of his Russian language skills, preceded to order

breakfast at his hotel. He wrote shortly afterward, "So in our pride, we ordered for breakfast an omelet, toast and coffee and what has just arrived is a tomato salad with onions, a dish of pickles, a big slice of watermelon and two bottles of cream soda."

In addition to the way pride bounces back and embarrasses the proud, so also pride injures those all around like a grenade that sends shrapnel flying. One person's pride makes another person feel small, squelching that person's self-respect. That's why Paul urged us not to become "puffed up" with knowledge but instead to "build up" other people. (See 1 Corinthians 8:1 NIV.) In a reverse of pride, we are to think of others "as better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:3).

Pride injures those all around like a grenade that sends shrapnel flying.

Worst of all, pride is a snub toward God. It indicates we have forgotten that we are mere created beings, finite and flawed. It takes credit for what God has done for us. Ultimately, then, pride is a faith issue because it causes us to focus on ourselves, ignoring what God has done and disobeying what He has commanded.

One time Jesus called a small child over to Him and put the child among the people He was speaking to. Then He said, "I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 18:2-3). To become as a little child means to become humble. If we want to be right with God, we have to ask God to replace our pride with humility.

Humility is a quality every Christian should possess. As Puritan pastor Richard Baxter said, "Humility is not a mere ornament of a Christian, but an essential part of the new creature. It is a contradiction in terms, to be a Christian, and not be humble."

But what, exactly, is humility?

THINKING LESS OF ONESELF AND THINKING OF ONESELF LESS

Is humility thinking that you have no value or that you are the worst person who ever lived? Is it abasing yourself and cutting yourself down every chance you get?

No, of course not. Humility is being realistic about the human condition. This means we recognize that whatever advantages we

possess were given to us by God. It means we recognize that as sinners we are not so different from other people. And most importantly it means we recognize that, compared to God Himself, we are not marvelous at all.

Esther de Waal put it well when she said, “Humility is facing the truth.”

Humility is being realistic about the human condition.

It is useful to remind myself that the word itself comes from *humus*, earth, and in the end simply means that I allow myself to be earthed in the truth that lets God be God, and myself his creature. If I hold on to this it helps prevent me from putting myself at the centre, and instead allows me to put God and other people at the centre. For if I want to return to God I must reverse the destructive journey of Adam and Eve which began with that subtle temptation to be as gods.⁶

When we are realistic about who we are, we stop trying to magnify ourselves and start magnifying God instead. It is no wonder that the apostle Paul told us, “Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us” (Romans 12:3).

It has been said that humility is not only about thinking less of yourself but also about thinking of yourself less. Of course, thinking of yourself less is no easy task. So insidious is pride that one can even become proud of being humble. (At that point, though, you are not really humble anymore!)

Benjamin Franklin recorded in his autobiography, “There is, perhaps, no one of our national passions so hard to subdue as *pride*. Disguise it, struggle with it, beat it down, stifle it, mortify it as much as one pleases, it is still alive, and will every now and then peep out and show itself.... Even if I could conceive that I had completely [*sic*] overcome it, I should probably be proud of my humility.”⁷

Still, humility is possible for us to achieve. It is possible when we surrender our pride to the Holy Spirit’s ministrations. He will make us humble. And as He does so, He will make us more like Christ.

Beginning at His birth in a manger, and throughout His life as a carpenter and itinerant rabbi, Jesus dwelt among humankind humbly. “Though He was God, He did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, He gave up His divine privileges; He took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When He appeared in human form, He humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross” (Philippians 2:6–8). Along the way, He taught His disciples about servant leadership (see Matthew 20:25–28), and demonstrated it visibly by washing the dust from their feet (see John 13:1–17).

As followers of Christ, we are to model ourselves after our humble Lord. As Paul taught, “You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had” (Philippians 2:5).

And then, God elevated Him “to the place of highest honor” and “gave Him the name above all other names” (Philippians 2:9), so also we will be raised up in honor by God if we will first voluntarily lower ourselves in humility. “Those who humble themselves will be exalted” (Matthew 23:12). “Take the lowest place at the foot of the table. Then when your host sees you, he will come and say, ‘Friend, we have a “better place” for you!’” (Luke 14:10). “Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else” (Mark 9:35).

We should not pursue humility for the sake of its rewards; rather, we should pursue it because it is right. But if we are humble, we can expect God to bless us for it. As Jack Miller put it, “Grace runs downhill to the humble.”

If you need to think less of yourself and think of yourself less, begin the spiritual healing process now. The Holy Spirit will help you identify ungodly pride in your life and replace it with Christ-like humility.

SOUL PRESCRIPTION FOR PRIDE

Are you struggling with a form of sinful pride? We have outlined a five-step process to help you work through the repair of that

area of your life. Take all the time you need with each of the steps below.

Step 1: Adopt a Correct View of God

When you have a distorted view of who God is, you will not give Him the reverence and respect which are due to Him. As a result, your arrogance will be free to develop until you suffer the consequences of your pride.

Consider some truths about God that will help you with your pride problem.

- God is infinitely superior to us. He is absolutely perfect and we are not.

How can a mortal be innocent before God? Can anyone born of a woman be pure? God is more glorious than the moon; He shines brighter than the stars. In comparison, people are maggots; we mortals are mere worms.

—Job 25:4–6

- God has supreme authority over us. He determines our eternal future.

How foolish can you be? He is the Potter, and He is certainly greater than you, the clay! Should the created thing say of the one who made it, “He didn’t make me”? Does a jar ever say, “The potter who made me is stupid”?

—Isaiah 29:16

If you tend to think too highly of yourself, focus more on the greatness of God. Undertake a Bible study on the nature of God, especially His majesty and power. Ask God to reveal Himself more clearly to you.

Step 2: Revise Your False Beliefs

God wants His people to be living examples of His love to others. Yet pride is the single greatest obstacle to loving people. Reflect on your attitudes with the help of the questions that follow.

- Do you think you are better than others?

What gives you the right to make such a judgment?
What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if
everything you have is from God, why boast as though
it were not a gift?

—1 Corinthians 4:7

- Do you think that you are indispensable?

By the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not
think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather
think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance
with the measure of faith God has given you.

—Romans 12:3 NIV

- Do you think that your accomplishments and position en-
title you to special favor?

It's not good to eat too much honey, and it's not good to
seek honors for yourself.

—Proverbs 25:27

Such beliefs are all self-centered, self-appreciating, and degrad-
ing to others. Even so, your identity in Christ is not to be one of
selfish ambition and pride but rather one of self-denial and grace-
filled humility. Allow Scripture to inform your views of yourself,
other people, and life in general so that you will not be proud in
a sinful way.

Step 3: Repent of Your Sin

The hardest thing for a proud person to do is admit that he or
she is wrong. Are you prepared to do that? If so, give your type of
pride a specific name (conceit, vanity, or whatever).

Then pray the following prayer (or a similar one of your own
making) in faith that God will forgive your sin and empower your
obedience. Insert the name of your particular type of pride in the
blanks.

God, I know I have sinned by _____. I am sorry for the pain I have given to You and to the people around me. Please forgive me for my sin. Wash away all of the _____ from me. And by Your Spirit, give me the strength to sin no more in this area but instead to live in humility. In Christ's name, amen.

If you have harmed others with your sin, apologize to them. Seek reconciliation and offer restitution where appropriate.

Step 4: Defend against Spiritual Attacks

Pride is easy to slip back into after you have repented. You can even become proud of your humility! Be certain that the world, the flesh, and the Devil will do all they can to pull you back into your sin of pride.

- The values of the world system are topsy-turvy, including promoting pride as a positive thing. The world system gives us messages like “You should think highly of yourself” and “Try to keep yourself in the spotlight.” Overcome the world by inviting God to transform your thinking so that you come to agree with Him about the importance He places on humility.
- Your flesh (sinful nature) craves the good feeling it gets when you inflate your ego and selfishly seek attention from others. So remind yourself that your sinful nature is actually already dead. Cooperate with the Holy Spirit, who seeks to magnify God, not God's creatures.
- Satan will lay opportunities in your path that will make it easy for you to exercise your pride. Resist his schemes by putting on the whole armor of God. Especially use the “belt of truth” (Ephesians 6:14) by reminding yourself that God is the one who deserves honor, not you.

Spiritual attacks will never cease. So remain alert. The power of God is more than enough to defend you against spiritual attacks so that you may continue to live in a way that is consistent with your repentance.

Step 5: Flee Temptation

You will never fully be able to escape temptations to be proud. But you can significantly reduce these temptations—and thus improve your chances of remaining free of pride—if you will just take specific steps to avoid temptation.

- Focus on your relationship with God.
Strengthen your devotional life. In particular, focus on giving God glory and humbling yourself before Him.
- Latch on to God's promises.
Search the Scriptures for truths about pride and humility, then memorize the verses that you think can best help you to resist pride. Recall these verses whenever temptation arises. The following are a couple of verses you might want to memorize.

Anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.

—Matthew 18:4

Humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time He will lift you up in honor.

—1 Peter 5:6

- Establish safeguards.
Make changes in your lifestyle that will reduce your temptation to be prideful. Be bold here! Be creative! These are a few possibilities to get your thinking going:
 - If you tend to look down on people of a lower social class than your own, volunteer to serve some of society's down-and-outers.
 - If you are proud of your looks, get rid of the clothes or makeup which you think flatter your looks the most.
 - If you like to show off by driving up in a flashy car, trade it in for a vehicle that is more modest and practical.
 - Ask a trusted Christian friend to hold you accountable in your commitment to not be prideful.

- Expect victory.
Do not focus on your failures of the past but rather on God's ability to give you lasting victory over pride. Believe that He will implant a more humble attitude in your heart—for good. And give Him the praise in advance!

Visit www.SoulPrescription.com for more insights and resources, and to download a free leader's guide for small group Bible studies.

Appendix A



HOW TO KNOW GOD PERSONALLY

Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, so there are spiritual laws that govern your relationship with God.

Law 1: *God loves you and created you to know Him personally.*

God's Love

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

—John 3:16

God's Plan

This is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

—John 17:3

What prevents us from knowing God personally?

Law 2: *People are sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love.*

Human Beings Are Sinful

All have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard.

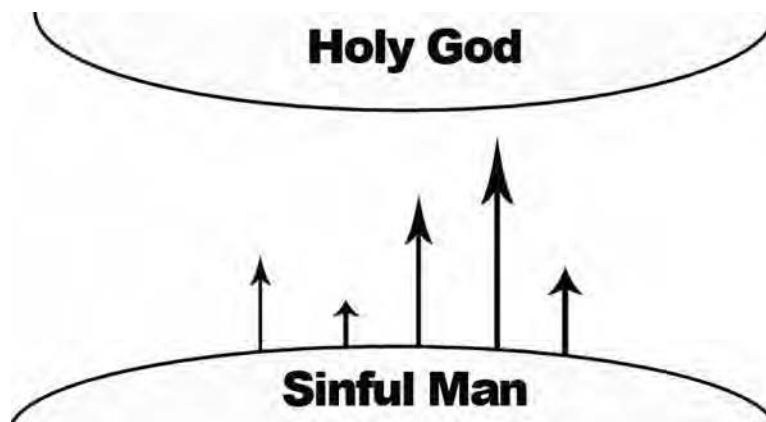
—Romans 3:23

The human race was created to have fellowship with God. But because of our own stubborn self-will, we chose to go our own independent way, and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Human Beings Are Separated

The wages of sin is death [spiritual separation from God].

—Romans 6:23



This diagram illustrates that God is holy and humanity is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that people are continually trying to reach God and establish a personal relationship with Him through their own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion—but they inevitably fail.

The third principle explains the only way to bridge this gulf.

Law 3: *Jesus Christ is God's only provision for human sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love.*

He Died in Our Place

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

—Romans 5:8

He Rose from the Dead

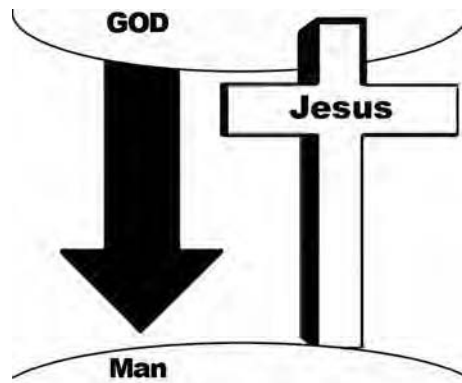
Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at one time.

—1 Corinthians 15:3–6

He Is the Only Way to God

Jesus told [Thomas], “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

—John 14:6



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place and pay the penalty for our sins.

It is not enough just to know these truths.

Law 4: *We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then we can know God personally and experience His love.*

We Must Receive Christ

To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

—John 1:12

We Receive Christ through Faith

God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

—Ephesians 2:8–9

When We Receive Christ, We Experience a New Birth

After dark one evening, a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to speak with Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are proof enough that God is with you."

Jesus replied, "I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven. So don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

—John 3:1–8

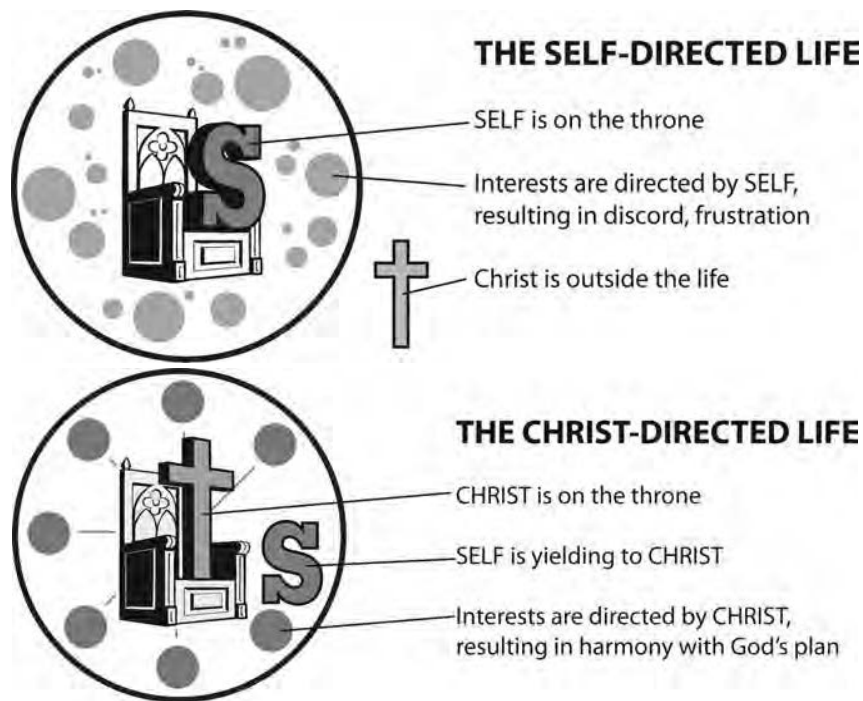
We Receive Christ by Personal Invitation

[Christ said,] "Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends."

—Revelation 3:20

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of our will.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives.



Which circle best represents your life?

Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

You Can Receive Christ Right Now by Faith through Prayer

Prayer is talking with God. God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I want to know You personally. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If it does, pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

How to Know That Christ Is in Your Life

Did you receive Christ into your life? According to His promise in Revelation 3:20, where is Christ right now in relation to you? Christ said He would come into your life and be your friend so you can know Him personally. Would He mislead you? On what authority do you know that God has answered your prayer? (The trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word.)

The Bible Promises Eternal Life to All Who Receive Christ

“This is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God’s Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life. I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.”

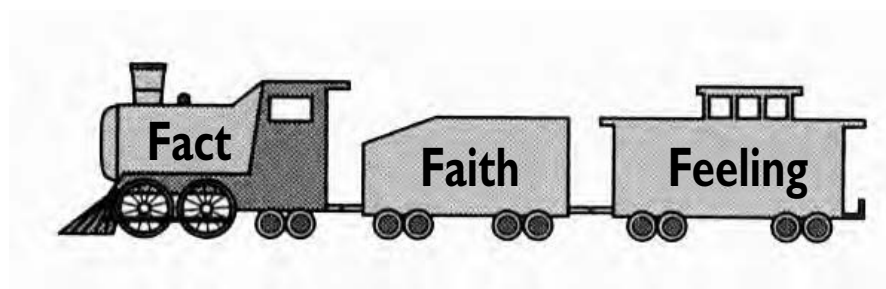
—1 John 5:11–13

Thank God often that Christ is in your life and that He will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). You can know on the basis of His promise that Christ lives in you and that you have eternal life from the very moment you invite Him in. He will not deceive you.

An important reminder...

Do Not Depend on Feelings

The promise of God’s Word, the Bible—not our feelings—is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship among fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word), and feeling (the result of our faith and obedience). (Read John 14:21.)



The train will run with or without the caboose. However, it would be useless to attempt to pull the train by the caboose. In the same way, we as Christians do not depend on feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word.

Now That You Have Received Christ

The moment you received Christ by faith, as an act of your will, many things happened, including the following:

- Christ came into your life (Revelation 3:20; Colossians 1:27).
- Your sins were forgiven (Colossians 1:14).
- You became a child of God (John 1:12).
- You received eternal life (John 5:24).
- You began the great adventure for which God created you (John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Can you think of anything more wonderful that could happen to you than entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Would you like to thank God in prayer right now for what He has done for you? By thanking God, you demonstrate your faith.

Suggestions for Christian Growth

Spiritual growth results from trusting Jesus Christ. “The righteous man shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11). A life of faith will enable you to trust God increasingly with every detail of your life and to practice the following:

- G** Go to God in prayer daily (John 15:7).
- R** Read God’s Word daily, beginning with the gospel of John (Acts 17:11).
- O** Obey God moment by moment (John 14:21).
- W** Witness for Christ by your life and words (Matthew 4:19; John 15:8).
- T** Trust God for every detail of your life (1 Peter 5:7).
- H** Holy Spirit—allow Him to control and empower your daily life and witness (Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16–17).

Fellowship in a Good Church

God's Word admonishes us to "not neglect our meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25). Several logs burn brightly together, but put one aside on the cold hearth and the fire goes out. So it is with your relationship with other Christians. If you do not belong to a church, do not wait to be invited. Take the initiative; call the pastor of a nearby church where Christ is honored and His Word is preached. Start this week and make plans to attend regularly.

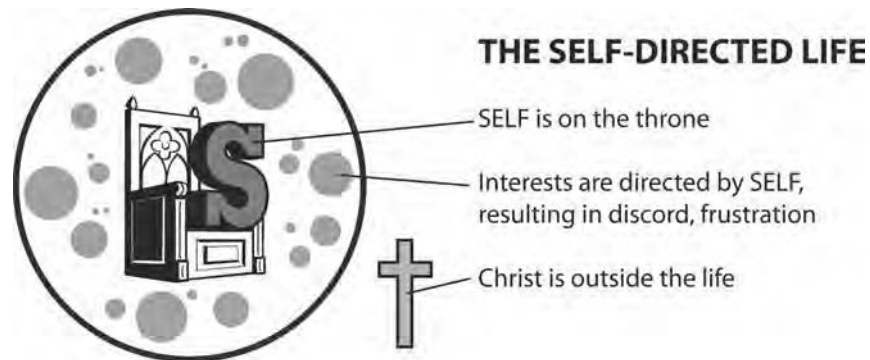
Appendix B



HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Every day can be an exciting adventure for the Christian who knows the reality of being filled with the Holy Spirit and who lives constantly, moment by moment, under His gracious direction.

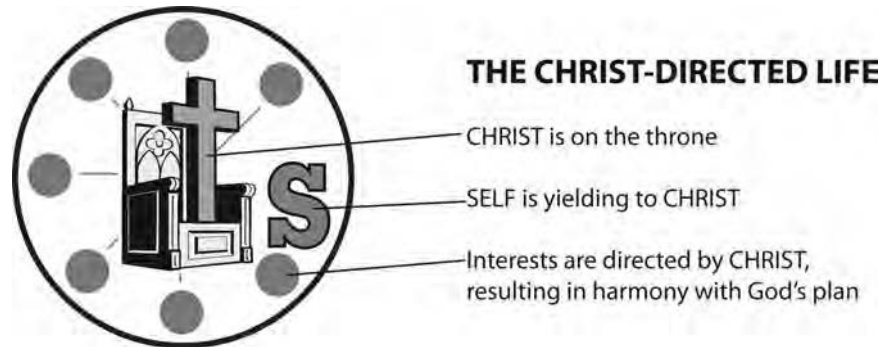
The Bible tells us there are three kinds of people:



1. The Natural Person: One who has not received Christ

People who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means.

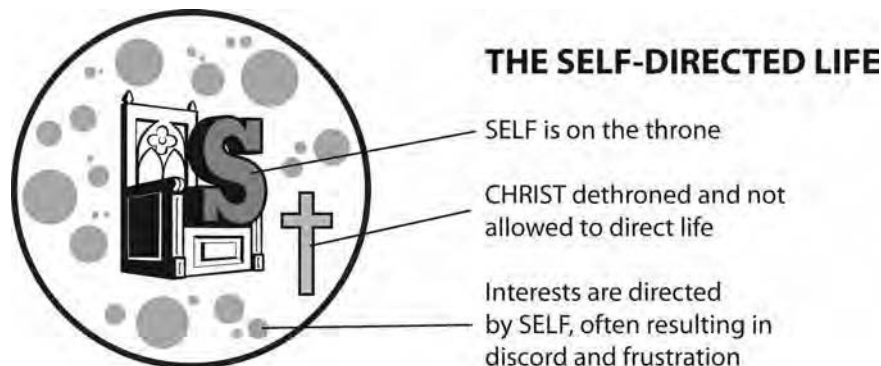
—1 Corinthians 2:14



2. **The Spiritual Person:** One who is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit

We who have the Spirit understand these things.... We have the mind of Christ.

—1 Corinthians 2:15–16



3. **The Worldly (Carnal) Person:** One who has received Christ but who lives in defeat because the person is trying to live the Christian life in his or her own strength

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord.

—1 Corinthians 3:1–3

The following are four principles for living the Spirit-filled life:

1. God has provided for us an abundant and fruitful Christian life.

[Jesus said,] “My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.”

—John 10:10

[Jesus said,] “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

—John 15:5

When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

—Galatians 5:22–23

When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

—Acts 1:8

The following are some personal traits of the spiritual person that result from trusting God:

Christ-centered
Empowered by the Holy Spirit
Introduces others to Christ
Effective prayer life
Understands God’s Word



Understands God’s Word
Trusts and obeys God
Experiences love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness,
faithfulness, gentleness,
goodness, and self-control

The degree to which these traits are manifested in the life depends on (1) the extent to which the Christian trusts the Lord with every detail of life and (2) his or her maturity in Christ. One who is only beginning to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be discouraged if he or she is not as fruitful as more mature Christians who have known and experienced this truth for a longer period.

Why is it that most Christians are not experiencing the abundant life?

2. Worldly Christians cannot experience the abundant and fruitful Christian life.

Worldly (carnal) people trust in their own efforts to live the Christian life:

- They are either uninformed about, or have forgotten, God's love, forgiveness, and power (Acts 1:8; Romans 5:8–10; Hebrews 10:1–25; 2 Peter 1:9; 1 John 1; 2:1–3).
- They have an up-and-down spiritual experience.
- They cannot understand themselves—they want to do what is right but cannot.
- They fail to draw on the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life (Romans 7:15–24; 8:7; 1 Corinthians 3:1–3; Galatians 5:16–18).

Some or all of the following traits may characterize the worldly person—the Christian who does not fully trust God:

Unbelief

Disobedience

Poor prayer life

No desire for Bible study



Legalistic attitude or critical spirit

Impure thoughts, jealousy, guilt

Worry, discouragement

Loss of love for God and others

(Those who profess to be Christians but who continue to practice sin should realize that they may not be Christians at all, according to Ephesians 5:5 and 1 John 2:3; 3:6–9.)

The third truth gives us the only solution to this problem.

3. Jesus promised the abundant and fruitful life as the result of being filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15).

- One becomes a Christian through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, according to John 3:1–8. From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the

Holy Spirit at all times (John 1:12; 14:16–17; Colossians 2:9–10). (Though all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled—that is, directed and empowered—by the Holy Spirit on an ongoing basis.)

- The Holy Spirit is the source of the overflowing life (John 7:37–39).
- The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ (John 16:1–15). When one is filled with the Holy Spirit, he or she is a true disciple of Christ.
- In His last command before His ascension, Christ promised the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:1–9).

How, then, can one be filled with the Holy Spirit?

4. We are filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit by faith. Then we can experience the abundant and fruitful life that Christ promised.

You can appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit right now if you:

- Sincerely desire to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:6; John 7:37–39).
- Confess your sins. By faith, thank God that He has forgiven all of your sins—past, present, and future—because Christ died for you (Colossians 2:13–15; Hebrews 10:1–17; 1 John 1; 2:1–3).
- Present every area of your life to God (Romans 12:1–2).
- By faith claim the fullness of the Holy Spirit, according to

His command: Be filled with the Spirit.

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.

—Ephesians 5:18

His promise: He will always answer when we pray according to His will.

We can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

—1 John 5:14–15

Faith can be expressed through prayer.

How to Pray in Faith to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone. However, true prayer is one way of expressing our faith. The following is a suggested prayer:

Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have sinned against You by directing my own life. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to again take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I pray this in the name of Jesus. As an expression of my faith, I now thank You for directing my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If so, bow in prayer and trust God to fill you with the Holy Spirit right now.

How to Walk in the Spirit

Faith (trust in God and His promises) is the only way a Christian can live the Spirit-directed life. As you continue to trust Christ moment by moment,

- Your life will demonstrate more and more of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and will be more and more conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Your prayer life and study of God's Word will become more meaningful.
- You will experience His power in witnessing (Acts 1:8).
- You will be prepared for spiritual conflict against the world (1 John 2:15–17), against the flesh (Galatians 5:16–17), and against Satan (1 Peter 5:7–9; Ephesians 6:10–13).
- You will experience His power to resist temptation and sin (Romans 6:1–16; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 1:19–23; Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 1:7).

Appendix C



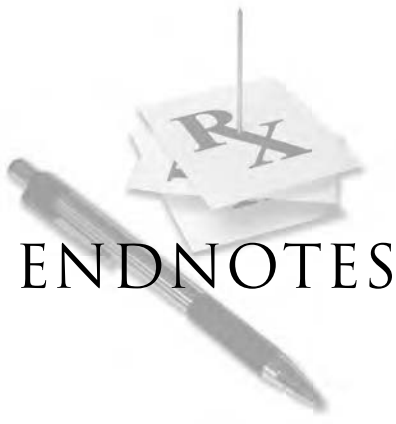
SPIRITUAL BREATHING

If you become aware of an area of your life (an attitude or an action) that is displeasing to the Lord, even though you are walking with Him and sincerely desiring to serve Him, simply thank God that He has forgiven your sins—past, present, and future—on the basis of Christ’s death on the cross. Claim His love and forgiveness by faith and continue to have fellowship with Him.

If you retake the throne of your life through sin—a definite act of disobedience—breathe spiritually. Spiritual breathing (exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure) is an exercise in faith that enables you to experience God’s love and forgiveness.

1. *Exhale:* Confess your sin—agree with God concerning your sin and thank Him for His forgiveness of it, according to 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:1–25. Confession involves repentance—a change in attitude and action.

2. *Inhale:* Surrender the control of your life to Christ, and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith. Trust that He now directs and empowers you, according to the command of Ephesians 5:18 and the promise of 1 John 5:14–15.



ENDNOTES

1. The pride of the king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:3–23) and the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:1–19) may reflect Satan’s overweening pride and desire to supplant God.
2. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 112–13.
3. Frederica Mathewes-Green, “Pride: The Anti-Self-Esteem,” Beliefnet (http://www.beliefnet.com/story/110/story_11056_1.html), accessed November 2003.
4. See also 1 Timothy 2:9.
5. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 95.
6. Esther de Waal, *Living with Contradiction: Reflections on the Rule of St. Benedict* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989), 96.
7. Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin and Selections from His Other Writings*, Modern Library (New York: Random House, 2001), 101.

A stack of papers with a pen and a paperclip. The papers have a large 'Rx' symbol on them. The pen is a dark, sleek ballpoint pen. The paperclip is a standard metal paperclip.

MORE RESOURCES

Free Discipleship Courses

Sign up for one of these weekly personal development courses at BiblicalCounselingInsights.com/courses/.

From Coping to Cure

Why are so many Christians unhappy? From Coping to Cure by Dr. Henry Brandt looks at the relief available through people helping people, through human efforts apart from God. Then, the lessons explore the many dimensions of Christ the Cure: God's healing love can transform the most miserable life into one of comfort, joy, and deep personal peace. Lessons are sent once per week.

Keys to Happy Family Living

Sent once per week, Keys to Happy Family Living by Dr. Henry Brandt is written for anyone who desires to be the best marriage partner and the best parent possible. Happy, successful parenthood is based upon a successful partnership, which in turn requires two individuals who themselves are happy, contented and competent.

I Want Happiness Now!

Are you dejected and desperately unhappy? Good news! You can find relief from your frustrated, hopeless condition resulting from your response to the circumstances and people in your world. In this weekly series, I Want Happiness Now!, Dr. Henry Brandt reveals how you can tap into the resources freely given to us by God so you will be a truly radiant, contented and joyful person.

The Struggle for Inner Peace

This weekly study addresses the problem that many Christians hold hatred, fear, resentment, jealousy, and malice toward others. As a result, fellowship with these persons and the Lord is broken, joy is lost, and God's peace is not enjoyed. Confessing and forsaking one's sinful ways in obedience to the Lord and His Word are necessary if the Christian is to enjoy God's peace. This series was written with the hope that many Christians will be helped in their "struggle" for inner peace, released from anxiety, and set free to experience the "fruit of the Spirit" which includes peace (Gal. 5:22).

More Free Resources

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Does your life feel out of control? Are you struggling to free yourself from a web of destructive habits that are holding you in bondage? Are you engulfed in an endless cycle of trying to change but continually falling back into sin?

Soul Prescription offers the healing and hope you seek. With a unique, methodical, and biblically based approach to eliminating sin habits, this book will help you evaluate your behavior and attitudes in light of God's standards. As the authors gently lead you through the process of turning away from debilitating habits, you will be free to embrace Holy Spirit-empowered virtues.

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www.HenryBrandtFoundation.org.

Dr. Bill Bright was devoted to holy living and spent more than five decades building and leading Campus Crusade for Christ. Fueled by his passion to present the love and claims of Jesus Christ to every person on earth, he wrote the booklet The Four Spiritual Laws, which has been printed in 200 languages and distributed to more than 2.5 billion people. Find out about his 100 other books and pamphlets at:

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