

Come Up Higher

**Transformational Truths
from the Word of God:
a Personal Journey**

**Altha Thompson Burts
with Janet Prince**

Isaiah 40:31

*But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their
strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles.*

Come Up Higher

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Acknowledgments

My deep appreciation and thanks to:

Janet Prince without whom this book might not have been written. As I finished the first draft of this book, it was apparent that someone more skilled than I would need to take my rough draft and develop it into a real book. The Lord spoke to Janet about doing this, and subsequently she spent many hours patiently asking questions of me to gain greater insight into my life, intently listening and taping, and then praying her way through the task of transforming my conversational style into this finished work by way of her own expression, giftedness, and expertise.

Jennifer Ramey for her patience, flexibility, encouragement, support, and hours of typing. Without Jennifer's skill in assembling and formatting, the completion of this manuscript would have been improbable.

Greg Burts, my husband, for his encouragement and support, which gave me the freedom to devote myself to this project.

Foreword

Altha, your manuscript is a deeply moving account of God's amazing grace in your uniquely individual life experience. While it is assuredly true that we all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, the particular, specific sin and suffering you have experienced gives rich expression to Paul's words, "where sin increased, grace increased all the more." It is truly gratifying to know that "those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness" are meant to "reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ."

Truly God's greatest miracles are the astounding changes His presence effects in His redeemed people. Your life is living evidence that "this treasure is in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."

Thank you, dear sister in Christ, for your willingness to learn obedience by the things you have suffered, following the pattern of Jesus Himself. We who claim to be in Christ need to know the glory of the inheritance we have in Him who is our Life. You have declared this truth beautifully, both by word and deed, and in the process you are honoring your Lord. Thank you for showing yourself to be His servant.

Elaine Stedman, author of *A Woman's Worth*.

Wife of the late Ray Stedman; author, pastor, Bible expositor.

Preface

In June 1996, the Lord spoke to my spirit during my quiet time. He asked me to share in written form the testimony of His transforming work in my life. Although I was more than willing to acquiesce to the Lord's request, I felt a deep concern for my children. Would young ones of such tender ages, Esther being eleven, and Joshua only nine, be able to understand and deal with a background as troubled as mine? The Lord graciously set my heart at rest by assuring me that He would impart spiritual understanding to them. He would help them to mature as they began to see the world's pain through His eyes of compassion and love. After all, they have witnessed firsthand God's mighty power to heal and transform a person who many people saw as hopeless. Truly, nothing is impossible with God.

With those fears allayed, I was anxious to fulfill God's desire for us to comfort those in need with the comfort that He has given us—to give hope to the hopeless and despairing.

In this book, I have shared my heart as well as some of the truths that have had a healing effect on my life. My hope and prayer is that the Lord will use these truths, as they were applied in their transforming power in my life, to encourage others who are searching for wholeness in their lives. May He also deepen and strengthen the roots of His life in those who are already grounded in these truths.

The reader will notice that I have quoted heavily from David Needham's book, *Birthright*, which is now out of print. In spite of the differences in our background, we share many similarities in our journey. I'm very grateful for Mr. Needham's work, his struggle, and for the impartation of truth in his book. The understanding I received from the truths he imparted were very instrumental in helping me discover wholeness in my true identity in Christ.

May the Lord guide you by His Spirit into the high destiny to which He has called you in Christ.

In His glorious life,

Altha

How To Use This Book

This book is not just a testimony. It is intended to be a tool to help accelerate the transformation process which has already begun in your life. At the end of the book is an index of topics that were key to my process as the Lord revealed them to me and showed me how to apply these Scriptures to my need for healing and transformation.

As you read this book, you will note I give key Bible passages that support what I present under each topic. I encourage you to read these Scriptures. Also, it is helpful to remember that the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a process. It will not usually occur in a single reading of Scripture, but through ongoing study, prayer, and meditation.

As you read and reread key passages, please ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the personal application of the truths presented to your everyday living. You might want to ask, "How do these truths apply to my present and my future life?"

I encourage you to find a quiet place to study where you will not be distracted by outside influences. There, alone with God, you can open your heart to His teaching, comforting, and correcting ministry. Please remember the ongoing transformation you seek is not a matter of high IQ or superior education. It is a matter of heart attitude. Jesus told us that if we are willing to do His will, He will reveal His truth to us (John 7:17). I encourage you to ask God to minister deeply to your life through His Word, the Scriptures, and this very personal story. As you do, His Holy Spirit will enrich your life as He has done mine. In this way we cooperate with Him in our personal life transformation.

God bless you in your journey.

Altha

Introduction

The believer who is living the Enthroned Life in experience, though he be at his work, in some office, at school, at home, or in some shop, breathes a heavenly atmosphere the live-long day. His spirit exults in the very life of God. His cup is full and running over. Praise is in the very beat of his heart. He is as conscious of the heavenly places in which his spirit moves, as is the worldling of the pleasures the world heaps at his feet. He knows that he is looking down upon the world from the top, for his position is Christ's Throne. Jesus the Lord maintained just such a position during the days of His earthly ministry as we see from His words: 'No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven' (John 3:13).

Life goes on the same as it always has. The believer attends to his duties, whatever they may be, as before. There is no particular change in the normal course of the believer's walk at home, at worship, at work, at play. The only difference to be noted in him is that all now springs from a deeper, purer love. There is a joy never seen before. There is a humility the depths and genuineness of which amaze the observer. His supreme delight now is service—he must seek the lost even as his Savior did and bind up broken hearts. There of course is no display of a superior spirituality. There is an esteem and love for others that makes such a thing impossible. There is nothing abnormal, nothing exaggerated, nothing unbalanced. But there is a consciousness of power, the 'rivers of living water' promised by the Savior, flow unhindered from the heart of such a one; and the world is overcome because in such a sphere (heavenly places in Christ Jesus) it cannot enter. Here, motives are godly, purposes are Christ-like, life is as pure, as rich, and as full as the fragrance of roses on a clear morning in June after evening showers (p. 33).

I quote this passage from *The Enthroned Life* by F. J. Huegel because it so beautifully and accurately describes the life of Altha Burts. As I see it, hers is a life of glorious exultation in the presence of God, lived in love and humility among her fellow human beings. Her life is one of utter simplicity and "ordinariness" in most ways. But those who know her are keenly aware that her life is "*hidden with Christ in God*" where she is "seated in the heavenlies" (Colossians 3:3; Ephesians 2:6). She is "*manifestly an epistle of Christ, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart*" (2 Corinthians 3:3).

The object of this book is not to exalt Altha. She would never want that. Her purpose in sharing her life so openly is to exalt God our Father and His glorious Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, Deliverer, and Healer.

It is also to proclaim that His healing is readily available to all believers through His written Word, illuminated and empowered by the Spirit of God. The experiential level of truth, abiding in our glorious Lord, to which God has brought Altha, can and should be the normal life experienced by every born-again believer. It is our birthright.

If, as you read this book, you find yourself hungering for the fullness that Altha has found, and thirsting for the refreshing waters of God's Spirit to quench the parched dryness of your life, then be assured that here you will find some treasured secrets that will lead you to the hidden streams of life that flow from God's heart to yours. You will not be disappointed in Him. Only Jesus truly satisfies.

Janet Prince

Chapter 1

The Early Years

My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.
Psalm 63:1b

Childhood

The thirst was very real in those days. You know the kind of thirst I mean: the dryness of soul, the heart so parched and cracked for want of the refreshing streams of human love. You've felt that same dryness yourself on occasion, haven't you? Or maybe it's been more than occasional. Perhaps you've endured that drought for longer than you ever thought possible.

Oh, what I wouldn't have given for a kind word, for an understanding look, for a warm embrace. But there was no one who ever seemed to notice, much less care that this eleven-year old girl was withering up inside. Why should anyone care? After all, my mother was gone now. It had been six long years since leukemia had stolen her from me. How I missed her! When she died, I thought that life could not get any worse. But I was wrong.

Shortly after my mother's death, my father separated me from my brother, and I went to live with people I barely knew. Who can describe the depth of abandonment that a child of five feels when she loses her mother to death, her brother to forced separation, and her father to separation through apparent passivity and self-absorption?

After two years of separation from my family, my hopes of belonging again soared when my father came to take me back home. I was seven years old then. I was happy to be back home. But it wasn't quite as I had initially hoped. My brother and I had to work long hours doing chores on the ranch. Instead of bonding with us, my father seemed distant and lacking in affection.

After two more years, my father decided to remarry. At last, I would have a new mother. Another chance for closeness and affection. I expressed my delight to my new stepmother. She let me know in no uncertain terms that she had no intention of being close to me. It looked like the loneliness and isolation were not over!

Even then I never imagined how much worse it was going to get. It turned out that my stepmother was an abusive alcoholic, who would take such an intense hatred toward me, that she would beat me without provocation. What was almost worse, my father, who should have been my protector, stood idly by, lost in his own drinking, watching most unconcernedly as my stepmother unleashed her rage on me. There were many nights when I crept outside to sleep in the dog kennels, so great was the danger of physical harm I felt in my house.

Like a City without Walls

It seemed that there was no safe place for me. Because we lived on a two-and-a-half acre ranch where we boarded dogs, there were often men around. They seemed to sense my lack of parental protection and, when the opportunity arose, took advantage by sexually molesting me. The most frequent abuser was a perverted man who lived across the street from our ranch. To all appearances, he was just a kindly neighbor who was taking a neglected girl under his wing. No one but I could see that his wings concealed claws that were literally tearing me apart.

Those years of sexual abuse were filled with mounting emotional confusion. On the one hand, there was a certain amount of comfort that came from the closeness of those men to me. After all, I had long craved in vain the affection of my father. But with the comfort came revulsion and a deep sense of dirtiness and shame. (Was this all somehow my fault?) The fear, confusion, and shame became more than I could bear; little by little, I learned to become numb by distancing myself from reality.

As a deeply sensitive child, the only way I could cope with the pain of such ongoing abuse was by learning to escape into a world of fantasy. I believe this coping ability is a gift from God to traumatized children which enables them to survive years of relentless abuse and pain without suffering an emotional breakdown. It's a kind of disassociation from one's self.

After experiencing several years of sexual abuse I realized I must tell my father what was happening to me. I naturally assumed he would be outraged at this violation of his young daughter. Surely, he would stop these men and protect his little girl from further harm! I managed to muster up enough courage to talk with him. I can only say that my growing sense of worthlessness and aloneness was deeply confirmed by his indifference and lack of compassion for me. Never did silence thunder so loudly! This kind of pain could only be endured by closing down my person. A feeling of coldness began to grow for my father as well as fear and revulsion toward men.

A New Place to Live

I desperately needed a new environment in which to live, so I fantasized one and emotionally moved in whenever the threat and pain became more than I could bear. Physically, however, I was still in grave danger in my home until, finally, the

bruises on my body became noticeable and frequent enough that the school officials could no longer ignore them. The authorities were called and I was removed from my home at age twelve.

I was deeply sad about leaving my family, but relieved to be released from the abuse to which I had been subjected. But now where would I go? Into whose care would I be entrusted? The state of California? Can a child really belong to the government? Not exactly a comforting thought to a frightened, wounded child. But that became my reality, as it has for so many other needy children.

Thus began a five-year period of being identified as a number in the depersonalized world of the social service system. After several months in the institutionalized children's shelter, I moved from one foster home to another. Some of the foster parents sincerely tried to help. Others made it clear that since I was in *their home*, I was to be their personal servant. This is how I spent my early teen years.

My soul thirsts for you in a dry land where there is no water. Psalm 63:1

Teen Years

After spending five years in foster homes, I was very glad at age sixteen to find that someone was actually taking a personal interest in me. A woman who had been a close friend of my real mother took steps to secure legal guardianship over me. My brother had contacted her after learning about the unhealthy foster home I was living in at the time.

I was deeply grateful to Alice for becoming my guardian. She graciously provided everything she knew of to care for me. The material provision was more than ample, for Alice was a very wealthy woman. In fact, this new world of luxury created unwelcome challenges to an insecure teenager unaccustomed to comfort of any kind. How could a shy, introverted girl, whose childhood days were spent trying to avoid notice by an abusive stepmother, whose nights were spent sleeping on a cold, urine-soaked, concrete kennel floor, suddenly fit into a world of debutantes and parties?

The sudden plunge into a world of wealth and social position, after years of material and emotional deprivation, proved more than my fractured identity could endure. I had become little more than a shell of a person. I began to take amphetamines to bolster my confidence. Lacking all internal resources, I felt like the drugs provided me with a new strength and ability. Somehow they made me feel braver, more outgoing, and capable. They seemed to help my very scattered mind to focus on my studies. It wasn't long before I was thoroughly dependent on drugs to get through the day.

Not realizing my emotional sickness, and wanting me to have the finest education, my guardian sent me off to the best school money could buy. The

deep loneliness and inferiority I felt there added additional weight to the already crushing burden of my sense of inadequacy. My heart hardened in rebellion, and bolstered by a false sense of courage by amphetamines, I sought escape from all control.

My flesh longs for you in a thirsty land where there is no water.
Psalm 63:1

Chapter 2

The Lost Years

Anesthetizing the Pain

At age twenty, without my guardian realizing my addiction to drugs, I initiated a break in legal guardianship and joined my brother in San Francisco. I desperately needed someplace to belong and a sense of my identity. My main purpose in life was to somehow fill the emptiness I felt inside. I did this by delving more deeply into drugs and involving myself in the homosexual community. Since I had no sense of personal identity or worth, and no belief structure of my own, I easily absorbed the thinking and lifestyle of the people around me. Things I would have considered wrong in my younger, more sensitive years, no longer seemed bad. My feelings of rebellion overcame any sensitivity about society's disapproval of my new lifestyle. All that seemed to matter was easing the gnawing pain inside. My conscience had become so seared that I could do almost anything and feel no remorse. As the Word says in Ephesians 4:17-19:

...in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

The End and the Beginning

My downward spiral into physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual destruction went unchecked for seven years. During this time I moved to southern California with a woman I became intimately involved with. Our relationship had gone on for almost six years even though we had been living separately at the time. My mind had deteriorated to a state of serious mental illness and I suffered a breakdown. I often thought of suicide. The sense of depression and futility was so great. What was my life worth? Would anyone really care if I disappeared from this earth?

Have you ever had those thoughts? If you have, you know how those inner voices taunt you with accusations and words of despair. But something or Someone kept encouraging me not to give up. In spite of my debased mind, God reached out and caused me to begin to ask deep questions about my life... Who am I? What is life all about anyway? Is there a book that can tell me what life is all about? I kept asking myself these questions. (They may be the same questions you have asked yourself.)

The Lord Draws Near

One day, when my life was at the bottom, a woman in my apartment complex spoke to me. She said that she had been watching me. She seemed to sense

how sick and desperate I was. With great tenderness, she told me about God's love for me. She explained that He understood my helplessness and pain. She said that He had sent His beloved Son Jesus to reunite us with Himself, to die for us and bear the punishment that our sins deserve.

I knew all about sin! What I knew nothing about was God's boundless love for me in Jesus Christ. How was it possible? *The holy God who created the universe and everything in it saw me, knew all about me, and loved me anyway!* When I heard that, my heart broke with sorrow for my sin and gratitude for His love and forgiveness. I wept for hours as Jesus washed away my sin and filled me with His life. I was born again.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. John 1:12
NASB

I can't explain how He did it, but during that night when I first encountered Jesus, He showed me His heart of love. Words cannot describe what I saw of His tenderness, compassion, and mercy toward me and all that He has made. He began to reveal to me the glorious destiny for which He had created mankind. He gave me a taste of the intimacy He has always desired to share with mankind, His exalted creature, made in His image and likeness.

I began to understand the tragic effects that Adam and Eve's sin brought about in the human race. In fact, their separation from God created consequences that have not only altered the human race, but all creation. The world we see now is not the world as God created it. The world that God originally made was beautiful and wondrously suited for mankind's enjoyment. The world we see today has been tragically altered by sin. The disintegration, decay, destruction, devastation, futility, sickness, and death we see all around us were never a part of the world God created. Rather, the world as we see it is totally marred by the effects of sin and separation from God. And yet, God gets blamed for creating the devastation that mankind's sin caused.

God began to show me the hopeless and helpless condition of mankind after sin had severed his relationship with God. In fact, we, born of Adam, were so helpless that only the sinless God Himself could free us from the bondage and debt our sin incurred. So, because of His great mercy and love, God gave His own beloved Son as the full ransom price to die for our sins so we could be set free. Jesus took the curse on Himself, so we would not have to bear it.

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2 Corinthians 5:21

What a glorious deliverance He offered me. He had done it all! All I needed to do was to believe in the great salvation won for me by Jesus, God's Son, and turn

away from my life of sin, and receive Him as my Lord. "Yes," I told Him. "I will turn away from my empty life of sin and futility. I welcome You, Lord Jesus. Come into my heart and reign in my life. I will leave all and follow you."

I fell in love with Jesus that night. My heart nearly burst with love for my newly found Savior and Lord.

Have you opened your life to the Savior's love? Can you even now hear Him knocking on the door of your heart? Don't refuse so tender a Savior, so great a love.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20

When the next day dawned, the burden of sin and shame was gone. I was a new creature in Christ. The joy I began to experience in His presence cannot be described in words. That terrible thirst for love and meaning began to be satisfied.

...if anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. John 7:37-38

...and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. John 6:35

Hearing Him Call

You may be wondering, "Is God interested in me? Does He want to come into my heart, too?"

The answer to that is an unequivocal "Yes!" We are assured in John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

If you believe that God sent His Son Jesus Christ into this world to die for your sins and mine and that He raised Jesus from the dead, then you only need to ask Him to come into your heart to receive Him. You can invite Jesus Christ into your life right now by praying:

Dear God, I know I am a sinner and that I need Your forgiveness. I repent of my sins. I believe Jesus died in my place to pay the penalty I deserve. I believe He rose from the dead. I now invite Jesus to come into my life as Savior. I choose to follow Him as Lord of my life. Thank You for forgiving me my sins and making me Your child. Thank You for the gift of eternal life.

If you made the decision to receive Jesus Christ as Your Savior and Lord and prayed that prayer, you have become God's child and received eternal life. Take God at His word and trust Him, not your feelings. If you experience any doubt, read John 3:16 again.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Also read John 17:3: *And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.*

Romans 10:9, 10, and 13 assures us "...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

You may be thinking, "I go to church, so doesn't that mean I'm saved?" Not necessarily. To become God's child—to be born again—you must receive Him. He will only come into your heart if you invite Him. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"* (John 1:12).

Your decision of whether or not to ask Jesus into your heart is undoubtedly the most important one you will ever make. Is there any reason why you cannot invite the Lord Jesus into your heart right now? Why wait another day? He has waited so long for you.

Chapter 3

Young Believer

The Journey Begins

It all sounds so simple and so final, doesn't it? You probably think that the story is almost over. All is well. I'm saved. What more could there be? But really, the story *was only just beginning*. Oh yes, it all happened so fast—in a moment my *spirit* was reborn. I left the kingdom of darkness, of separation from God, and came into the kingdom of light, the kingdom of union with God's Son.

Who delivered us out of the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. Colossians 1:13-14

I did become God's child forever. Jesus Christ took up residence within me. I became a new creature in Christ. But let me say again: all that took place in my spirit. The rest of my person, my soul and body—that's another story (Hebrews 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:23)! Now we're talking about a slow, step-by-step process taking months and even years of transformation. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Let's back up to the day after my encounter with Jesus Christ. When I woke up the next day, I knew that I had been radically changed inside. I was profoundly conscious of the presence of my wonderful Savior Jesus Christ within. His love for me spoke so deeply to my heart that I was captivated by Him. Mine was no half-hearted commitment. The Holy Spirit gave me faith to make a commitment to discipleship; that is, to follow Him for the rest of my life. I plunged myself completely into His love. "Speak to me, my Lord. I'm listening and waiting to obey. Whatever You tell me, I will do."

Listening and Following

His first instructions to me were in regard to my body. He spoke to my heart, that I needed to get rid of my drugs; so I flushed them down the toilet. He gave me confidence in His power and love to sustain me.

This confidence in itself was *no small miracle*. Over the past ten years, I had become completely dependent on drugs to survive the emotional pain and daily stresses of life. I would sometimes take up to thirty amphetamines a day. I stole from people I knew to supply my habit. In fact, I continued to take drugs in spite of the devastating toll they were taking on my body. For example, my throat had abrasions inside as if it had been sliced by a knife from the amount of drugs I was taking. But that had not stopped me from using them.

Furthermore, my mental capacity had been sorely affected by taking acid. I had experienced the damaging effects that drugs had had on my ability to think clearly, to focus, to comprehend, and to remember things. Yet, none of that had motivated me to stop. But when Jesus, my Great Physician, lovingly told me to get rid of the drugs, I knew He would give me the *will* to do it and the *power* to live without them. And He did. So you see, we're talking about a wonderful miracle here.

Next, He dealt with my emotional dependence on my female companion. I talked with her and explained that the Lord Jesus was making me whole and that He wanted my relationships to be upright and righteous in His eyes. She was very upset and after an emotional outburst, it was clear that our relationship was to be severed. Although this was a painful decision, I knew it was what He wanted for my good and He gave me the faith and power to do it.

On the Move

Then Lord had me move away from Hollywood and the whole gay culture in which I had been immersed. Just as He led the Israelite slaves out of Egypt to get them away from their captivity, so He led me away from the people with whom I had shared the bondage of the homosexual lifestyle.

I moved to Santa Ana and got a job at Sears. During this time the Lord was leading me into habits of discipleship with Himself. He taught me to rise early to spend time communing with Him in His Word. I was learning the joy of being alone with my Lord, discovering that only Jesus truly satisfies.

I began to attend a wonderful Bible-teaching church where I learned much about the goodness and power of the Lord Jesus. Fellowship with other Christians was very difficult at that time because the world I had recently left was so different from the world I was just becoming a part of. Also, at times, when I shared freely about the life I had been delivered from, some Christians were shocked and felt uncomfortable around me. I spent a lot of time alone with the Lord. It was a time of great intimacy and trust, walking in loving obedience to my Lord and Savior.

After about six months in Santa Ana, the Lord opened the door for me to move to northern California and live with the parents of a male friend of mine. He, like me, had recently received new life in Christ and come out of the homosexual lifestyle. His mother, a devoted Christian, had been praying for him and me. His parents were gracious in opening their home to me and gave me a job in their lithograph company in Palo Alto.

Mind Renewal

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you

may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2

During this time, the Lord began a *major mind renewal* in me. My mind had been so scattered by the damage of drugs and the mental breakdown that it was very hard for me to focus on anything. So the Lord had me listen to tapes about His Word for hours each day. The healing power of His Word began its transforming work. *He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions* (Psalm 107:20).

The Holy Spirit led me to write things that I was reading. This helped me retain things more than just reading did. Little by little, I began to experience a change; my mind was starting to function again. I was learning to trust in His goodness and care for me.

Surfacing the Pain

After living with a friend's parents for several months, I got an apartment and moved out on my own. I was attending Peninsula Bible Church in Palo Alto, California, and learning much about the Lord. It was a time of precious intimacy and communion with Jesus. He would wake me up in the morning and I would spend time in His Word—as much time as I could. But it was also a time when the deep pains of my emotional illness were surfacing. Without the drugs to anesthetize the pain, *I had to start facing all the hurt that was bottled up within*. I didn't understand at the time that the Great Physician was allowing the hidden wounds to surface so He could heal them.

I began to eat compulsively, no doubt using food as a form of comfort. It was frightening to feel so out of control around food and to see my weight rising. (Do you know what I mean about feeling panic over food?) To solve the problem, I began purging. I had become bulimic. Binge and purge. I could not stop eating and throwing up. There were days when I threw up so much that I was too sick to go to work. Little did I know that this insatiable craving for food was really a heart hunger to belong, to be loved, to feel significant.

Finally, I broke this compulsion to overeat. Then I went to the other extreme and became anorexic, feeling life was really in control now. That false sense of control acted as a fragile, protective shell hiding the emptiness I felt inside. The pain was so great, for I had not learned the truth of Isaiah 53:4-5—that Jesus bore my pain.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, ...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:4-5

During this time, I was very isolated from people because of my insecurity. It's true that I saw people at work and at church, but my *fear of intimacy kept everyone at a distance*. Was I afraid that if anyone really did get to know me they would discover the confusion inside? Did I even have an identity worth knowing? I really didn't know.

Finally, I met a woman with whom I felt safe. I actually wanted to open up to her. This was a deviation from my normal pattern of indifference to others. After months of isolation, it felt good to have a friend. In fact, it felt so good that I went to extremes in this area just as I did with food. I soon found myself enmeshed *in an emotionally dependent relationship* leading back into old patterns of sexual sin. I was so disappointed with myself and frightened to see I was falling into sin and seemingly powerless to stop.

To my shock, I realized I was experiencing some of the same sinful feelings I had before being saved. Yet, in obedience to Jesus, I had left my former sinful lifestyle. I never wanted to return to it or to offend my Lord.

I saw myself as a forgiven sinner but still struggling in my new life in Christ. How was I to glorify God? Was the answer to try harder? Well, I did just that because *I loved Jesus with all my heart*. But trying harder did not give me the internal freedom I was so desperately seeking.

Fearing that I was falling into old patterns, I decided to go to a psychiatrist to help sort things out. But instead of offering me any insight into or freedom from the *identity conflict* I was experiencing, she tried to refocus my *behavior* by asking the question, "What do you want to be doing in five years?" My answer was, "I don't want to sin. That's all I know. I don't want to sin against the Lord."

Her question did not help me with the fundamental problem of my identity conflict. What I needed to know was not *what* I wanted to do, but *who* I was! I knew I was a Christian. I knew I belonged to God and that I loved Jesus with all my heart. But here I was with these strong feelings which were not consistent with following Jesus.

For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. Romans 7:15

What I didn't know then, but was soon to learn, is that my *feelings are not me* (that is, not my *true* identity). At that time I was not able to separate between my mind and my emotions. Also, I knew nothing about the distinction between soul and spirit. No one had ever told me that my soul consisted of my mind, will, and emotions. Nor did I know that my spirit, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is designed to direct my soul, which then governs my body. But I'm getting ahead of myself again.

Chapter 4

New Identity Realized

Identity Revealed

Let's return to the relationship problem. Although my friend wanted to continue the friendship as it was, I knew that I could not continue it on an emotionally dependent level. I had to be obedient to the Lord who loved me and wanted the highest for me. But the question was, *could* I be obedient? Was it even *possible* for me to choose to do good? If I was only just a forgiven sinner, then could I ever hope to act like anything else? Was there any hope for someone like me, especially coming from the damaged emotional background I had! Was there really hope for me to change and live the life to which I was called and committed?

Oh, with what mercy, grace, and power the Holy Spirit answered my question! He gave light to my understanding about the new creation reality so I was able to grasp a sublime truth revealed in His Word, the Bible, that precious Word which has power to change a person's life. The Father of glory gave me ongoing wisdom and illumination in the knowledge of Him as revealed in Galatians 2:20.

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Right now, if you have already been born again, ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your understanding to receive these liberating words in the depths of your spirit.

Can you grasp the exceeding greatness of the power of these words? You can have full confidence in the truth of these words, because God, who cannot lie, spoke them. Oh, let the Holy Spirit of wisdom and revelation enlighten your understanding to hear these words in your heart as I heard them in mine (Ephesians 1:17).

Let me share my personal paraphrase of the truth of Galatians 2:20. Listen to what the words said to me that day:

I, Altha Thompson, a confirmed sinner with the scars and even open wounds resulting from years of abuse, twisted thinking, unhealthy and sinful living, hopeless by most any standards, least likely to succeed in any holy lifestyle, am crucified with Christ. I no

longer live. That sick and tragically damaged woman died with Christ on Calvary and she no longer lives. *But now Christ lives in me.* At His resurrection, He rose from the grave and is *alive and has come to live in me.* The life I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Yes, there is hope for me (and for you, too). No matter how the tragedies and sins of life have eroded my person and my past, *Christ is my present, my source of life.* My future is full of the promise of abundant life which His Holy Spirit has the will and power to work in me.

...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10

The reception of that truth marked a major turning point in my life. All the problems that had been plaguing me *did* have a solution. I now had hope because I saw that I had truly become a new person in Christ. I now had the power to choose.

Before, I felt like an unwilling victim of my past, completely subject to my personal history of defeat, unable to garner the power to make right choices. I now saw that Christ had taken up residence within me. When I received Him into my heart and was born anew, I became completely identified with Him on the cross. When He died, I died. When He was buried, I was buried. When He rose to a new and glorified life, I too rose to His glorified life within me. All these truths are substantiated in Romans 6.

Before, I had been searching for my identity. Now what a glorious new identity had been found: "It's no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). This was the truth and the hope on which I could build a righteous life. On this sure foundation, I began to make rapid progress toward building a healthy, whole, and holy life. The immediate issues regarding my emotionally dependent relationship and my eating disorders began to resolve themselves under the guidance and liberty of the Spirit. *That is not to say that it happened overnight, or that it was easy or painless.* Nothing could be farther from the truth. It was still a painful process, but it was now a possibility. I had a choice. I had the power in Christ to choose the right way, His way.

First came the *knowledge* and *illumination* of the precious truth of Christ in me, my new creation identity. Then, little by little, came the practice of learning to walk in that truth. God began teaching me how the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to bring about psychological healing. He accelerated the process through the great truths found in Romans 8:5-6:

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the

things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

I began daily to set my mind on the things of the Spirit, not on the things of the flesh. While this involved struggle, it was worth it. The Holy Spirit increasingly filled me with joy and peace in my Christian life.

Trusting the Great Physician

Furthermore, I was also growing in my understanding of Galatians 2:20, already referred to. I paraphrased the verse to read, “It is no longer Altha, but Christ who lives in me.” God used this truth to begin a deep healing of my identity conflict which was responsible for so much of my struggle after being born again (John 3:1-16).

The first area of my life where I experienced this was in the area of addiction. Relying on Christ’s presence within me, over the next two months, the Lord enabled me to quit a smoking habit of ten years.

The next area of my life where I experienced His healing was my eating disorders. He spoke to my heart and told me to eat a full meal. I shook with fear at the thought of it. (Those of you who have struggled with anorexia understand that fear.) In childlike trust I obeyed Him. But oh, the feelings of vulnerability and disorientation and shame! I felt dirty and out of control. But in faith *I continued to obey His Word*, looking by faith to my new identity in Christ.

I didn’t ignore my feelings, but refused to *gauge reality* by them. Instead, I took my feelings to the Lord my Healer, trusting that as my mind became renewed according to His truth, my feelings would eventually fall in line. I believed that to walk by the Spirit would lead to an ever-increasing measure of life. Every day I would meditate upon the words of Romans 6:11, “*I am dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” My recovery from anorexia was *slow and painful*, but God’s grace and strength upheld me. It took a year for the full healing to manifest; but it did come—a new and healthy relationship with food.

It was in the area of my emotional life and my inclination toward same-sex emotional dependency where I experienced such wonderful transformation as I progressively understood that it was the old Altha, not the new Christ-in-Altha that was in such emotional bondage. Now, He had given me a new identity—His life in me. I was a new creation. The issue of homosexuality, perhaps more than any other of my issues, was an identity problem. Like so many others who have struggled with their sexual orientation, I needed to see myself as a new person. Oh, what a joy to *know* you are new, what hope and encouragement! As I learned from my pastor at the time, Ray Stedman:

We think we have to change the way we act in order to be different, and God says, “No, I have made you different and when you believe it you will automatically change the way you act.”

Progressively and ultimately, my feelings changed and I knew that my healing was complete; in my sexual identity, I was becoming the person, experientially, that God had intended me to be.

I should say a word here about my healing experience in this area. First, I learned that the force of these feelings was being fed, as it were, by the strongholds of deprivation and loneliness that I had known as a child. In these strongholds, I knew that Satan had a hold on me and unless I could be delivered from those demonic forces, I would never be truly free. God gave me the insight and discernment to recognize that I needed to break those strongholds. As I broke one after another through repentance and prayer, I experienced greater and greater freedom to think thoughts and make choices that were consistent with my new identity.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Second, I learned with regard to sexual healing and wholeness that *forgiveness is key*. I needed to forgive my father, the men who had molested me, and myself. I understood that at that age, I was not responsible for what happened. After forgiving, I began to be freed from the repulsion I had toward men and the personal shame and dirtiness I felt.

I know many who have struggled with the anger and shame that stem from sexual abuse, who have been set free from their past. They have moved forward in their new life in Christ to experience the joy of healthy emotional and sexual feelings. Indeed, He is the Great Physician.

God's ways are always healing and life-giving. One of the most instructive passages I've found in the Word of God is Proverbs 4:20-22. The truth contained there has been foundational to my healing. "...Pay attention to what I say, listen closely to my words, do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart, for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body" (NIV). The NIV Study Bible clarifies the word *health* in verse 22 as *physical, psychological, and spiritual*.

The Word of God cannot be health to either soul or body before it is heard, received, and attended to. Notice here that the words of God are life only to those who find them. If you want to receive life and healing from God, take time to find the words of Scripture which promise these results.

Oh, the efficacy of the Word of God! If we can only believe in what God says: that His Word will not return to Him void without accomplishing His transforming purposes (Isaiah 55:11). And "...*the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe*" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Believing is essential because we act according to what we believe. If I really believe that God will heal me through His Word, when I faithfully listen to it and attend to it daily and keep it ever in my heart, *then I will act* just as the Word says. I will daily look to His Word and listen to it, and meditate on it in my heart, expecting that He will heal me. I will not be disappointed, for He has promised, *“They looked to Him and were radiant and their faces were not ashamed”* (Psalm 34:5 NKJV).

The healing and transforming process continued gradually. My mind was still scattered and unable to focus well because of the breakdown. In fact, when layoffs occurred at my company, my inability to concentrate was a factor in my layoff. The foreman said he noticed that in spite of the simplicity of my task of counting books, I seemed to be mentally unable to do it. But my inability didn't stop the Holy Spirit from continuing to teach me His life-transforming truth. That is one of the beauties of the ministry of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit. Receiving truth in the inner man (the spirit) is not dependent on great intellectual capacity. Because we have the Holy Spirit, the true Teacher and Illuminator of truth indwelling us, high IQs are not an issue in genuinely understanding Scripture.

...when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth... John 16:13

I have found this to be true in my own life, as I have come to know the Holy Spirit intimately as my teacher, my companion, and my helper (Ephesians 1:17; John 14:16; Hebrews 13:6).

My next job was in an employment counseling agency. Would you believe that I did so well that after one year they asked me to be the manager? Praise the Lord for His ability to heal our minds. I was three years old in the Lord at the time. I was becoming intimately acquainted with the Lord my healer, or as He is called in Hebrew, *Jehovah Rophe*.

Life-Changing Truth

I spoke earlier about the Lord teaching me the life-changing truth of my new creation identity as expressed in Galatians 2:20. Let me tell you how that came about. God used the ministry of Chuck Solomon and his book, *Handbook to Happiness* to impact my life with the truth that “it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” By means of the teaching in that book, the Holy Spirit began to open up to my spirit the truth that Christ lives in me and that my former twisted life had died with Christ on Calvary when I accepted Jesus in my life and was born again.

Furthermore, God showed me that I was no longer “in Adam”; destined to live out a predetermined history of sin and its consequences. I was now in Christ, a member of a new family endowed with all that is needed for life and godliness (2

Peter 1:3). I inherited those gifts by grace when I was born by the Spirit into God's family through Jesus Christ. That is the miracle of the *new birth*.

My old family history of abuse, mental illness, and psychological damage need not act as a generational blueprint to limit my present and destroy all hopes for my future. No, that person, Altha Thompson, with that damaged history, died with Christ. It is now Christ risen and glorified who lives in me by faith. I am a new creation in Christ. These mysteries are very deep and are learned progressively over time as the Spirit reveals them to us in the Word. I suspect that we will never fully plumb the depths of these mysteries. But we are called to go deeper and deeper, allowing God to reveal and transform us through these truths.

Even with the limited understanding that I had at the time, I immediately began to tell others about these truths. As I began to share the truths of the believer's identity in Christ, the Holy Spirit moved mightily in opening up the heart of many believers to the reality of these truths. Soon after, I was led by the Lord to attend an internship in Denver, Colorado, at Grace Fellowship Institute, which was founded by the previously mentioned Dr. Chuck Solomon. I was very nervous about going, but believing this was God's will, I went.

When I finished my internship, I came back to California and began to counsel out of my apartment. By God's power, I saw lives begin to radically change. A chiropractor in Los Altos, Wayne Anderson, became aware of my ministry and offered me space in his office building as a contribution to my faith ministry. I was attending Peninsula Bible Church at the time and the board of elders confirmed my calling and decided to put me on missionary status. So God provided for me financially. He even provided a volunteer staff as well. The ministry grew, and so did I.

Growing in Truth

About this time, I came across a book that was extremely helpful in my understanding of the new identity I had received in my new birth. *Birthright* by David Needham helped clear up an important misunderstanding of who I had become in Christ.

The following quotes will show how my understanding began to grow and deepen:

Let's imagine God in His absolute holiness at the very top of a picture. Then down at the bottom, let's place me, a SINNER. Because I have received Christ, God has performed a remarkable thing. Since He obviously cannot associate with sinners—light cannot fellowship with darkness—He has inserted a miraculous filter between Himself and me, the sinner. The filter is Jesus. His death, His resurrection. Therefore, as God looks down on me, He doesn't really see me as I really am, but rather He sees all that is right about Jesus. Because of that wonderful filter, God's record

against me is wiped out. Everything I was and am, a sinner who sins, is completely erased. And further, everything that Jesus is has been written in place of that record. I am justified. I am “positionally” righteous. I am judicially righteous. This is the way God sees me. But if for a moment—horrible thought—that filter were not there and He saw me as I really am, He would call me what I am, a SINNER.

But God has done two other things. First, He has sent the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. Someone called alongside to help me, teach me, give me power. And secondly, God has given me a new nature. Therefore, though I am essentially a sinner, I do have a fresh capacity. So who am I? I am a SINNER with a new nature and the Holy Spirit. (p. 46)

My body is the temple of God because the Holy Spirit indwells me (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:21-22).

The Tragic Flaw

As Needham says:

Praise God there is some solid truth in this picture. It is true that all my sins, past, present, future, have been paid for by Jesus’ death. They are nowhere to be found in God’s records concerning me. And, praise God, I rest in the fact there has been no dubious “book juggling” to bring this about. As an objective fact, all of Christ’s righteousness has been correctly credited to my account.

But there is one serious error—a tragic flaw. An error that pervades dozens of popular books on the Christian life. I wish I could shout these next lines around the world! A Christian is not simply a person who gets forgiveness, who gets to go to heaven, who gets the Holy Spirit, who gets a new nature. Mark this—a Christian is a person who has become someone he was not before. A Christian, in terms of his deepest identity, is a SAINT, a born child of God, a divine masterpiece, a child of light, a citizen of heaven.

Becoming a Christian is not just getting something, no matter how wonderful that something may be.

It is becoming someone.

Only Saints Go to Heaven

Perhaps you are saying, ‘I thought that’s what everyone believed.’ Most emphatically, it is *not* what everyone believes. In the deepest sense of personhood, if you have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, you are not a sinner. You are righteous. But what ‘you’ are we talking about? Not some ethereal ‘positional’ you. But the most fundamental you, that ‘you’ which most deeply and eternally gives you authentic personhood. The ‘you’ that goes to heaven someday. Forgiven sinners can never go to heaven; they would

only dirty up the place. Only saints can go to heaven and you are a SAINT. If you are really thinking with me right now, there are probably dozens of reactions and questions that have a right to be considered.

I can hear some of you say, 'Isn't it the idea that Jesus is in me? Isn't it His righteousness that makes me right with God? I know how bad I am. If you knew me the way I know myself, you wouldn't doubt that for a moment. Yes, I know the Bible teaches that my old sin nature has been crucified, but it still has to be controlled, doesn't it? Doesn't the Bible say 'put off the old man?' Are you saying that a Christian doesn't sin?'

These are very important questions which we will need to consider carefully. But first let's listen to the exceptionally strange answer Jesus gave one night to an earnest, searching Jew.

'A New Kind of Species'

Nicodemus was hungry to know the way to God. All of his learning left him empty, questioning.

Jesus could have said, 'Nicodemus, you must be forgiven.' But He didn't.

Jesus said, *'Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God . . . You should not be surprised at my saying, "you must be born again"'* (John 3:3-7). Clearly Jesus did not mean 'birth' as some vague, symbolic, initiatory term, but rather an actual, radical change in one's essential being. Notice our Lord adds, *'Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the spirit gives birth to spirit.'* To enter the kingdom of God requires that one be a different species! (pages 46-48)

What an encouragement this gave me when the Holy Spirit opened it to my understanding! Again Needham says,

Consider physical conception and birth. Being born isn't simply someone getting something more that one didn't have before (like getting the Holy Spirit). No! Being born is becoming *someone who was not there before*. And that is exactly the issue in spiritual new birth! (p. 48)

Can you see the wonderful freedom this truth gives? It doesn't matter what your background was before you became a Christian. Being born again means you become someone you never were before at your deepest level. We all start at the same place, regardless of who we were and what we've done. You no longer identify with your background but you identify with who you have become at your new birth (2 Corinthians 5:17)! You identify with Jesus Christ and are transformed by His Holy Spirit from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Needham says:

My parents gave me ‘flesh’ birth’: I became somebody. A real, fullfledged person. Similarly, by the new birth, I became a brand new person, a spiritual person (p. 48).

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’ (John 8:31-32).

Searching the Scriptures

As this revelation was given to me by the Lord, I began to search the Scriptures and find in detail who the Lord had recreated me to be. *Through reading, meditating, praying, thinking, and making choices in the smallest areas of my life, I consistently identified with Jesus and the new birth reality.* I began to progressively change psychologically as I was obedient to His Word. His Word was beginning to be confirmed in me. *“He sent forth His word and healed them...” (Psalm 107:20 NIV).*

I had been wondering why my life and the lives of people around me did not really look like the early church, as depicted in the book of Acts—their love, power, and unity—how they manifested the risen Lord. Again, the Lord used an insight of Needham’s to answer my question.

This concept of identity, so fundamental and yet so mysterious, was well known within the leadership of the early church. Their words were clear words, their analogies simple and striking. They spoke without hesitation, unencumbered by the creative complexities theologians have dreamed up over the centuries (p. 49).

I began to realize that identity truths were not only life transforming but very fundamental to walking and operating in power. I needed to walk in unconditional obedience to the truths the Lord had shown me and grow in the knowledge of who He is, who I am, and who He is in me. This kind of obedient, Spirit-informed walk is essential if I am to operate in the power that He calls each one of us to manifest.

Needham gives more insight on not being the same person after we have received Jesus:

Perhaps this ‘new personhood’ idea seems far away from the daily reality of your life. That still doesn’t change the basic fact: if you have received the Savior, you simply are *not* the same person you were before. When you were ‘in the flesh’ (Romans 8:9, NASB), life and meaning for you had to be found right there—and there alone. Your brain, your emotions, your senses, your creativity, your glands, your world environments, your relationships—this was life. It could be found nowhere else.

But if you have been born again, this is not so anymore, *whether you know it or not!*

You may weigh the same,
Look the same,
Feel the same,
But you are not the same.

Jesus could look at a man or woman straight in the eyes and say, 'I have come that you might have life. You may think you are alive, but you aren't.' What? Weren't they doing everything 'live' people were doing ... eating, walking, loving, dreaming, planning, working? Yes, and yet, the Bible says, 'in Him was life!' (pages 49-50).

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Understanding Position

I would like to share here a quote from another author who was very instrumental in my coming to understand my identity in Christ. The author is Miles Stanford who wrote *The Principle of Position*. His book was very helpful in my personal understanding of the reasons for our struggles in coming into an experiential knowledge of those truths which are 'actual' but not yet personally experiential.

All spiritual life and growth is based upon the principle of position. It can be summed up in one word: source.

Through physical birth we entered our human family position, from which source we derive certain characteristics. We are the product of our position. Just so in our spiritual birth. Upon being born again, the risen Lord Jesus is the source of our Christian life; in Him we are positioned before our Father, in whom 'we live, and move, and have our being' (Acts 17:28), 'for we are His workmanship, created [born anew] in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:10). Our Father, in redeeming and recreating us, 'raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:6, ASV).

Our position, the source of our Christian life, is perfect. It is eternally established in the Father's presence. When we received the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior, the Holy Spirit caused us to be born into Him. He created us in the position that was established through His work at Calvary. 'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [creation]' (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is the eternal position in which every believer has been placed, whether he is aware of it or not. The Christian who comes to see his position in the Lord Jesus begins to experience the benefit of all that he is in Him. His daily state is developed from the source of his eternal standing.

Our condition is what we are in our Christian walk, in which we develop from infancy to maturity. Although our position remains immutable, our condition is variable. Through the exercise of faith, our eternal position (source) affects our daily condition, but in no way does our condition affect that heavenly position. 'If [since] ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God' (Colossians 3:1). 'Be strong in the Lord, be empowered through your union with Him; draw your strength from Him' (Ephesians 6:10, Amp).

When we concentrate upon our condition, we are not living by faith but by feelings and appearances. The inevitable result is that we become increasingly self-conscious and self-centered. Our prime responsibility is to pay attention to the Lord Jesus, to rest (abide) in Him as our position. There will then be growth, and He will be more and more manifested in our condition. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18).

If the believer does not know of his position in the Lord Jesus, and how to abide in Him as his very life, there will be but one result. He will struggle in his un-Christlike condition rather than rest in his Christ-centered position.

In most cases, a believer is more aware of his condition than of his position. This is the reason for so much failure and stagnation. If we are to grow and become fruitful, our faith must be anchored in the finished work of our position—in Christ. There is no basis for faith in our changeable, unfinished condition. Your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:5).

Scriptural, fact-centered faith in the Lord Jesus as our position before our Father is the one means of experiencing that finished work in the growth of our daily condition. Spiritual birth placed us in our accepted position, from which our spiritual condition is being completed, by faith. 'Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them' (Ephesians 2:10).

Every Christian has been positioned forever in the risen Lord by spiritual birth. But only the believer who knows, grows. It is faith in the facts of our position that gives us the daily benefits of growth in our condition. If the believer is not clearly aware of the specific truths of the Word, he cannot exercise the necessary faith for growth and service. He can only seek his resources in the realm of self. Some of the wonderful positional truths are set forth for our faith in the scriptural illustrations of the grain of wheat, and the vine and the branch (pages 11-13).

Learning to Walk by Faith

These teachings pressed home an essential truth: that we walk by faith, not by sight. All the blessings of healing, restoration, and wholeness promised in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus are present to the believer, but are only realized by faith.

“How exactly do you walk by faith?” you might ask. Quite simply, it is accomplished by looking past our circumstances and our feelings into the invisible world of truth as it is revealed in the Word of God.

“But my circumstances are flying in my face,” you say. Yes, they are. So you agree with what God says about them. He says that we should not lose heart even though everything around us in the natural world seems to be going wrong, because the inner man is being renewed daily. To say it in a different way, even though our outer man (our feelings, circumstances, and all the things in our natural life that we can see around us with our eyes and mind) is perishing, yet our inner man (our spirit, which is alive to God forever, born anew with His very nature) is being renewed day by day. He says that I can have His eternal perspective on life because I now have eternal life and destiny as His child. He says that if I take an eternal perspective on my life, I will not be discouraged. In fact, against the backdrop of eternity, my afflictions and trials will seem light and short-lived. And not only that, but my circumstances and trials are even worth something; they are working for me an eternal weight of glory. In other words, my trials are worth their weight in heavenly gold.

“Does it happen automatically or is there a condition?” you might ask. It is conditional. Our trials and afflictions are working an eternal weight of glory only while we do not keep looking at the visible circumstances—pondering and fretting over them. No, instead we keep looking by faith at the unseen realities that are eternal in nature. The circumstances in themselves have no eternal value. But when we allow the trials to lead us to God’s Word, then we are sanctified, healed, and set free by His Word (Psalm 107:20; Proverbs 4:20-22; 2 Corinthians 3:14-18).

“So it is in beholding, believing, meditating, and acting on God’s Word that I am healed?” you ask. Exactly. The trials of your life merely act as a winepress, pressing you into the heart of God revealed in His Word.

Let me now quote to you from the Word of God so that you will see where these truths come from:

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For

the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Chapter 5

Walking in Truth

Imparting Identity Truths

Several months after I began counseling in my office, I received a call from a man who was concerned about his cousin who was living a homosexual lifestyle in another state. He decided to fly his cousin to California to meet with me. When his cousin arrived, we talked and prayed together and the Lord brought her into the kingdom of God—she was born again! I also shared identity truths with her and she *began* to understand that she was a totally new creature in Christ. Then she returned to her home. (This young woman got married and is now a joyful wife and mother. Such is God’s healing, transforming power!)

A short time later, I received a call from the young woman asking me to come to her church to minister. I was commissioned as a missionary by Peninsula Bible Church and sent there with two other women to minister. While we were there, the Lord graciously provided much opportunity to counsel. Because of the identity truths we shared, we were able to give real hope for change to the counselees, regardless of their issues or background. We counseled there about five months and then returned home.

Ministry Back Home

Back home, my ministry continued to grow, and after a short time the Lord enabled me to incorporate and establish Inner-City Life Ministries, a biblical counseling ministry. He also provided offices in Palo Alto through the financial contributions of many people.

I continued to grow in the knowledge of the Lord and of who I am in Him and who He is in me. Eventually I wrote *Unless a Grain of Wheat*, a book which covers the panorama of our Christian journey. This book gives an understanding of our identity as Christians, the phases of our Christian pilgrimage, and how to maintain our walk. The book and accompanying study guide have been used by many individuals and groups in Bible studies and training.

One time I was counseling a woman who had been a heroin user for years. She was a young believer who was struggling so hard and growing discouraged. I shared with her the identity truths of who she had become at her new birth. The Holy Spirit illuminated this truth to her in a powerful way. I will never forget seeing her eyes grow big with hope and joy as she realized for the first time that she really had a chance. “It is no longer I myself but it is sin living in me,” she exclaimed (Romans 7:20).

“Yes,” I replied and quoted some statements of Ray Stedman’s from *Guilt to Glory Volume 1* which may also be helpful here.

We break the hold sin has on us by relying upon a new view of ourselves that is true because we are in Christ Jesus (author paraphrase – p. 200).

Our feelings must be answered by facts (p. 194).

The power of sin has been broken because of our union in Christ’s death and resurrection (Romans 6:6) **CAN’T FIND THIS**

We think we have to change the way we act in order to be different; God says, “No, I have made you different, and when you believe it, you will automatically change the way you act” (p. 208).

This struggle can cease only when we reckon on who we really are in Christ. Basically, what we need is a new self-image; that is what will deliver us. When we see who we really are, we can say ‘no’ to the flesh and ‘yes’ to the Spirit – and discover a whole new way of life (p. 201).

These truths were confirmed in the life of this heroin addict; it was the beginning of her journey of saying *no* to sin. Awareness of our new personhood in Christ is so key to understanding our ability to say *no* to sin and *yes* to newness of life in Christ Jesus.

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21

I came to see and appropriate the following truths in my life. What a difference they have made.

- For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) nothing good dwells. (Romans 7:18)
- But I am the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
- I am a new creation... (2 Corinthians 5:17)

- I am a holy priesthood... (1 Peter 2:5)

That's who I am and I am to reflect His glory. And so are you, if you are born again.

A quote from Watchman Nee's book called *What Shall This Man Do* will be helpful before we sum up our discussion of our identity in Christ.

Who Are You?

The expression translated 'We are His workmanship' (Ephesians 2:10) could as well be rendered: 'We are His masterpiece.' The Church is the very best God can produce. It can never be improved upon. We look around and see break-down everywhere and we wonder, 'What is the Church coming to?' I tell you, she is not "coming to" anything; she has arrived. We do not look forward to discover her goal; we look back. God reached his end in Christ before the foundation of the world, and we move forward with him on the basis of what already is. As we move in the light of that eternal fact, we witness its progressive manifestation.

Christian progress is not a question of attaining to some abstract standard, or of pressing through to some far off goal. It is wholly a question of seeing God's standard. You advance spiritually by finding out what you really are, not by trying to become what you hope to be. That goal you will never reach, however earnestly you strive. It is when you see you are dead that you die; it is when you see you are risen that you arise; it is when you see you are holy that you become holy. Seeing the accomplished fact determines the pathway to the realizing of that fact. The end is reached by seeing, not by desiring or working. The only possibility of spiritual progress lies in our discovering the truth as God sees it; the truth concerning Christ, the truth concerning ourselves in Christ and the truth concerning the church the body of Christ (pages 229-230).

We have been talking here at great length about finding out who we are in Christ; in other words, our identification with Him. Identifying something or someone involves knowing something or someone. It is the knowing that we sometimes overlook. That is why Paul urges us in Romans:

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should not longer be slaves to sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Romans 6:6-7

Identification with Christ begins with understanding our own death and burial (of the old man), and the resurrection of the new man. We are no longer slaves to sin... "for he who has died has been freed from sin."

It was at this point in my Christian walk that I began to learn about the enemies who were constantly warring against me in my walk with the Lord. I had already

become acquainted with my flesh as an enemy. I speak here of *flesh* as Scripture describes it, that natural part of me that we call self which is composed of the physical body and soul (mind, will, and emotions). Because of the fall of Adam, that flesh is naturally inclined toward sin. “*We have turned, everyone, to his own way*” (Isaiah 53:6.) That natural inclination, or sin-bent, is ever at war with my spirit which is reborn with God’s nature.

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. Galatians 5:17

God’s Word assures me that His Spirit residing within me has given my spirit dominion over the flesh, but I must diligently exercise that dominion by faith and obedience (Romans 8:2, 5, 9, 12, 13).

This is a daily process by which my ways (thoughts, words, and actions) align themselves more and more with God’s ways as revealed in His Word by saying *no* to my flesh wherever it is in opposition to God’s revealed way. Another way of saying this is obeying Jesus Christ as the sovereign Lord of my life. It is also referred to scripturally as crucifying the flesh.

In case all of this crucifying the flesh sounds negative, we need to look at it from God’s perspective: not death for death’s sake; but death for the purpose of releasing life—God’s life in union with Jesus Christ. After all, union with God in Christ is the goal. Through this union we learn the true meaning of consecration: “*...Present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead...*” (Romans 6:13).

An Unseen Enemy

It was at this point that I began to understand that my flesh was not my only enemy. I had been having difficulty coming into the reality of some of the truths revealed in God’s Word. It seemed I just couldn’t get it. I just wasn’t sure what was going on. Then the Lord introduced me to the dynamics of spiritual warfare. I began to understand that I was not only up against my own faulty thinking, but also principalities and powers that were out to hinder the Word of God in my life. Ephesians 6:12 says, “*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*”

Up until that time I had been unaware that the spiritual hosts of wickedness, or the demonic realm under the control of Satan, could have anything to do with a Christian. It is true that I knew something about the occult from an experience I had had many years ago, before becoming a believer. A friend of mine was involved in sorcery, unbeknownst to me. He had given me a book about calling upon spirits for companionship. At first, I found it to be a pleasant experience. It seemed innocent enough. Later, the demonic realm began to manifest itself in a very frightening way. Eventually, demonic spirits took control of me and were ultimately instrumental in bringing me to a mental breakdown.

Because I had that frightening involvement with the demonic, I wanted nothing to do with the truths spoken of in Ephesians 6. I ignored those truths for a while. Later, it became obvious that this is just what Satan would like us to do. When we are in ignorance or denial of his existence and devices, he can operate completely in stealth, his favorite method of deception.

Because of my fear, it was necessary to study and find out for myself just what was meant by Jesus “disarmed principalities and powers. He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them at the cross” (Colossians 2:15). I knew that “*faith cometh by hearing and hearing through the Word of God*” (Romans 10:17 KJV). Believe me, I was one woman who needed to replace fear with faith. I spent almost a year doing an intensive study of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments on the subject of spiritual warfare. What a transformation in my thinking it brought as the Holy Spirit illuminated one truth after another. The following quote from the *Spirit-Filled Life Bible (NKJ Version)*, the Kingdom Dynamics on New Birth will help immensely at this point.

Through New Birth we are introduced—literally we ‘enter’—to a new realm where God’s new kingdom order can be realized (2 Corinthians 5:17). New birth is more than simply ‘being saved’. It is a requalifying experience, opening up the possibilities of our whole being to the supernatural dimension of life and fitting us for a beginning in God’s kingdom order (p. 1577).

And again as quoted in part in the *Spirit-Filled Life Bible Kingdom Dynamics*, The Kingdom of God (p. xv):

24. Authority for Ministry (Luke 9:1, 2)

We may expect power over darkness; we are Christ’s authorized representatives and God will provide us with peace and power.

25. Prayer and Intercession (Luke 11:2-4)

Prayer is our role of functioning as “kingdom administrators” to see ministry birthed and triumphed.

28. Earth’s Evil “Ruler” (Luke 4:1-12)

The present world systems are grounded by the destructive rule of Satan.

29. Taking It By Force (Matthew 11:12)

The kingdom of God enters by a kind of force, opposing human status quo by the entry of the Holy Spirit’s power working in people.

30. Grounds of Authority (Colossians 2:13-15)

The Cross is man's only hope for relationship with God and reinstatement to his place of 'reigning in life'.

31. Pressing In (Luke 16:16)

The kingdom of God is advanced through preaching, impassioned prayer, confrontation with the demonic, expectation for the miraculous, and a flaming heart.

27. Receiving Kingdom Power (Acts 1:3-8)

The Holy Spirit is the One who brings power to man and must be received; it is not an automatic experience.

Training in Spiritual Warfare

The Lord began to bring people to me who were coming out of the occult. My heart was so full of compassion for these people. It was very apparent to me that they needed deliverance and healing. But though I had knowledge of their problem, I felt powerless to help them. I felt as if I were sitting in a doctor's chair, able to see, but lacking any power to help.

I called Ray Stedman who was on my ministry board of directors. He referred me to Tom Chandler who was a missionary who had experience in the deliverance ministry. He showed my staff and me some slides and taught us how a person becomes demonized and the way out of it.

At that time, I had been reflecting on a special prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-21:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Power from on High

As the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart leading me in prayer, on November 10, 1983, I went down on my knees in the privacy of my room and asked God that I

might be infused with power in my inner man, in accordance with Paul's prayer, that I might be able to help those in need. He answered my prayer. The next morning I knew in my spirit that I had been "clothed with power from on high" (Acts 1:4-8).

Healing Ministry

I began to minister in the area of deliverance and often, physical healing. I witnessed many people being set free from emotional and psychological bondage by divine intervention.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. Isaiah 61:1

At this time the Lord led me to Dr. Ed Murphy, a world-renowned teacher who was then vice president of Overseas Crusades. He had much experience in the area of spiritual warfare and has since written a book on the subject called *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*. He confirmed my ministry calling and was instrumental in "stirring up the gift of God within me" (2 Timothy 1:6). He was very helpful in directing me at this juncture of my life by giving me wisdom and balance in this area. He agreed to be on my board of directors and began referring people to me for help.

The Lord was teaching me to take authority in the areas of my life where there were strongholds (e.g., anorexia and bulimia) and I began to experience freedom. I taught others to draw on the Lord's strength as they learned to overcome the enemy in their lives (2 Corinthians 10:3-5), and they found a new freedom that they had tried unsuccessfully to achieve for years in their own strength. Praise the Lord! The enemy has been defeated (Luke 10:17, 19)!

So often we are unable to really believe, appropriate, or apprehend God's truth because of demonic strongholds of thinking which prevent us from understanding. Many of our bondages (alcohol, smoking, drugs, sexual perversion, excessive overeating) can be demonically influenced. That is not to be confused with being possessed, which is not possible for a child of God. Rather, strongholds can be thought of as giving a foothold to the devil, as warned against in Ephesians 4:27. Picture an overly aggressive salesman with his foot in your doorway, refusing to leave and continuing to shout suggestions into your house. That is something like what it means to have a stronghold in your mind. It's a foothold from which the demonic can shout accusations into your mind and amplify your fleshly thinking so loudly that you are unable to hear the truth of the Lord. And all the while, you think you are just thinking your own thoughts!

We are commanded to take our authority, to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God and resist the devil and he

will leave you (Luke 10:17; Ephesians 6; James 4:7). Resist him with the Word of God and the name of Jesus (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; Luke 10:17).

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

As the months turned into years, my intensive transformation and healing process continued. My intimacy with Jesus was growing steadily as I walked in the joy of His presence. As I personally became more whole, my attention was increasingly directed outward to others in ministry and service.

Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Isaiah 58:6-8

God had accomplished major surgery in many areas of my life and I was functioning as a healthy human being. I was quite settled in my relationship with the Lord and who I was in Him. My main concern now was for others to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and then continue in their sanctification process in which they come to experience healing and wholeness through union with Jesus, their healer and all-sufficiency. My days and evenings were devoted to this pursuit. Growing in my heart was a deep desire to minister God's full salvation to people in Third World countries.

Chapter 6

A New Season

What About Marriage?

At thirty-six years of age, I had been in full-time ministry for six years. As a single woman, I was very satisfied with my life, having very carefully cultivated contentment with my Lord. (In Philippians, Paul says, “*I have learned to be content.*” That was encouraging to me to realize that he wasn’t always content but he learned how to be content.)

One day a friend shared her concern for me. She felt I was spending too much time in ministry. She said I should think about getting married and therefore position myself in places more conducive to meeting eligible men. Her advice sounded practical enough; after all, I wasn’t getting any younger! I thought about it for a moment and then told her that I believed I was already in the perfect place. I knew I was doing God’s will, and if He had marriage in mind for me, He’d know right where to find me: in the place He wanted me to be.

Sometimes we forget that God knows our address. It’s in the Bible (Luke 1:26-27; Acts 9:11; Acts 17:26). I figured if I was doing His will, I wouldn’t miss the man or the ministry.

I’m Not Too Old!

As it turned out, God certainly did have marriage in mind for me. And oh, what a special man He had chosen for me! If I had gone out on a hunt, I couldn’t have found another man so wonderful and perfect for me. And to think God sent him right to my door! Here’s how it happened.

For some time, God had been moving in Greg Burts’ heart, drawing him back to intimacy with Himself after some years spent in the wilderness. Greg was walking closely with the Lord for about four years, when he felt a calling to be a biblical counselor. A mutual friend, Lambert Dolphin, told Greg he should contact me for some help and direction in getting started. Some time later, Greg and I met in my office. We each immediately sensed a kindred spirit, and made plans to work together. Greg was interested in teaching a men’s group in *Unless a Grain of Wheat*, a biblical course in our identification with Christ and our Christian journey. As we worked and ministered together, our relationship deepened and we felt God’s hand on our lives together.

Removing the Log

While we were engaged, I became aware of a need for a deep healing in my heart regarding my father. I had already forgiven both my stepmother and father

when I first came to know the mercy and forgiveness of God toward me in Jesus Christ. Strangely enough, it was easier for me to forgive my stepmother because I understood that she was mentally very sick. But in my father, I could find no excuse.

During the months that followed my conversion, many layers of pain, injury, and unforgiveness toward my father had been unearthed and brought to the cross for forgiveness. I had allowed the love of the Holy Spirit to fill my heart and wash away the anger and, yes even the hatred of my father. “...*the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*” (Romans 5:5). I thought the process was complete.

So how could I explain the source of this uncomfortable feeling now rising up in my heart toward Greg? I found myself regarding his gentle manner in a negative light, considering it to be passivity. Intellectually, I knew that the problem was really in me. Yet the feeling remained. Could there be, as Jesus said, a “*log in my own eye*” (Matthew 7:5).

When I brought the question before the Lord and asked Him to search my heart, He graciously showed me that I had made a judgment against Greg based on a previous judgment directed against my father. During all the time when I was being abused by my stepmother, my father had remained aloof, apparently passive and unconcerned. As the fear and pain took their toll on my body, the hatred toward my father was exacting a toll on my soul. A root of bitterness was growing there, ready to spring up unexpectedly and, as Hebrews 12:15 warns, cause trouble, thereby defiling many people.

So here I was, at this otherwise happy time of life, anticipating marriage with these roots of past judgments reaching their insidious tendrils, ready to strangle this new relationship. As I confessed those bitter-root judgments to God, the blood of Jesus cleansed me from my sin (1 John 1:9) and I experienced a tremendous sense of forgiveness toward my father. So deep was the release that I desired to reestablish communication with him.

My heart was so changed toward my father that I wrote to him in Hawaii and invited him to come to bless our marriage by giving me away to Greg. He chose not to attend our wedding. Nonetheless, I felt completely reconciled with him and had made peace with him, insofar as was possible on my part.

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Romans 12:18

(At a later time, I wrote to him and was able to share honestly with him how I saw and interpreted the incidents of my childhood and how the saving love of Jesus had lifted me out of darkness and despair to a life of joy and love. I don't really know how deeply he was able to receive the forgiveness and love extended to him, as he didn't acknowledge the abuse.)

Regarding my relationship with Greg, I was now able to see him clearly without the log of judgment in my eye. God used this incident to teach me the powerful truth of Hebrews 12:14-15:

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.

When we bury our injuries and pain in the soil of unforgiveness, they don't die. They grow roots in the darkness, often waiting to spring up to defile another relationship.

"But," you may object, "you had a right to judge your father. He should have protected you."

Yes, he certainly should have. I can objectively judge his behavior as unequivocally wrong. But I cannot safely judge his heart. Only God knows the heart and can make a right judgment about a person.

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. Romans 14:10-13

God wisely tells us to bring our injuries and griefs to Jesus who carried them all, and submit them to God, the just judge who alone is able to judge righteously.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... Isaiah 53:4

Who (Jesus), when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. 1 Peter 2:23

When I did that, my heart was transported to the heights of freedom and joy and peace—the shackles of unforgiveness fell away for good.

A Big Decision

Before we got married, Greg and I had to resolve a major difference we had about our future together—the question of having children. I had never desired to have children. I was void of those feelings. (I obviously needed much healing in that area.) Having children was not in my thinking, nor in my plans. On the other hand, Greg had always wanted children. He had enjoyed taking care of his

younger brother, had worked with youth in ministry, and at one time had even considered adopting.

By the time we got married, we had resolved this issue. Greg graciously decided that since my feelings were so strong, we would not have children. To that end, he had a vasectomy just prior to our marriage. In a joyous wedding ceremony, we committed our hearts and lives to each other in 1984.

Esther: The Honeymoon Surprise

On our honeymoon, after our marriage was consummated, I sensed a change in my heart. Still very ignorant of what it would be like to be a mother, I said to Greg, "Maybe we should be open to the Lord in case He had children in mind for us." (Greg was probably thinking, "Oh great! Now she thinks of it!")

There is a window, a time frame after a vasectomy is performed, in which conception is possible. As God in His goodness and providence would have it, we did conceive during that time frame. On the fifth night of our honeymoon, we became pregnant. What was so amazing was that I knew immediately that night that the miracle had taken place. I told Greg right away. Then I thought, "I need to get vitamins." Right from that first hour, God began developing a mother's heart in me as He caused me to feel concern for the health and well-being of the life so newly created within me.

For the next eight months of my pregnancy, I continued in the counseling ministry. Then, on April 3, 1985, after twenty-seven hours of labor, our beautiful little Esther Ruth was born, "*for such a time as this*" (Esther 4:14). How we rejoiced at her birth! How our lives have been enriched by the life of our precious Esther! She has a wonderful gift of mercy and a great depth of insight into people. The love I feel for her is beyond all telling. Isn't it amazing to think that God knew the mother's love in my heart before it even existed (Romans 4:17).

Inner Healing

When Esther was very young, I delighted in holding and cuddling her close to my heart. One day as I pondered my love for Esther, I recalled the feelings I had shared with my own mother, how the cords of love had bound us so close together. How sad I had been when I saw her growing weak with leukemia. Though I was very young and don't remember many incidents, I do remember the day that my father returned from the hospital and told me she had died. My young heart was wrenched apart.

As I reflected on that time, the anguish of sorrow and abandonment at her death washed over me like a flood and I cried out to God in anger: "Why? Why did You let that happen? Where were You during all those painful years when I needed You so desperately?" There was silence. I felt just like a wounded five-year old girl again, as I continued to pour out my sorrow and complaint against God. The childhood sense of loss and grief and fear loomed so large above me that it

actually frightened me. In anguish I kept crying out, “Why, God? Where were You?”

All the while, I sensed the Great Physician close by me. How well He understands the process of healing, since He designed it. He knows that when grief and pain are buried in the heart, they fester and poison the life from within. Therefore, He’s not shocked or offended when the poison is finally released. Almost as if He had inserted a shunt deep in my heart to draw up the long-festering grief and pain to the surface, my soul erupted, as the anguish poured out.

God didn’t answer my questions of *why?* and *where were You?* Yet, when I finally finished crying, I could tell by the deep peace in my heart that somehow He had answered. I knew He had healed my heart. You see, I have come to know God and His goodness. He cannot act contrary to His nature; therefore, anything He allows to happen to me, He can ultimately turn to good, if I will trust Him (Romans 8:28). And I do trust Him.

I needed to grieve the loss of my mother, and indeed, of my childhood. Jesus, the Great Physician, was with me, healing and comforting me, as I went through the process. When it was finished, I knew that I was changed. Some emotion deep inside me, which had previously been blocked, was released and I was freed to relate emotionally to God and other people on a deeper level. I experienced a depth of peace and wholeness that was greater than I had ever felt before. Truly, Jesus was sent to heal the brokenhearted. On that day I knew He had bound up my wounds (Luke 4:18, 21).

More Depth From Job

The book of Job can teach us a great deal about the important topic of grieving our losses and gaining inner healing. When Job’s life was devastated by financial ruin, the loss of loved ones, and finally the loss of his health, he continued to trust in God and His goodness, but he nevertheless cried out to God to explain to him, “Why?” When God finally did answer him, it was not the answer Job was seeking. In fact, God began to question Job.

Now prepare yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer Me. Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Job 38:3-7

For the next 119 verses, God chronicles the marvels of creation and asks Job if *he* is responsible for their power, order, and design. Suddenly Job realized the foolishness and audacity of his questions. Job said,

I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You... Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I do not know. Job 42:1-3

Job had been looking at his life from the perspective of a creature. God raised his vision and let him see it from the vantage point of the Creator. Job realized that he was like a tiny thimble asking God to pour the mighty ocean of His wisdom and purpose into him, so that he might ponder it. How impossible! Job saw the arrogance in his heart and cried out in humility and reverence:

I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes. Job 42:5-6

But through it all, God was not displeased with Job. He continued to refer to him as “My blameless and upright servant.” You see, Job never let go of his trust in God’s goodness. He knew God’s character. Although he questioned God and cried out in frustration and anguish, he held on to his confidence in who God is.

Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him... Job 13:15

And in the end, God restored to Job twice as much as he had before.

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. Hebrews 10:35

God is not upset with our honest, heartfelt questions, or even our anger. Many things He has already revealed to us in His Word. We need to search them out. Other things are, as yet, past our finding out. Deuteronomy addresses this:

The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. Deuteronomy 29:29

Sometimes we don’t get the answer we need because we need to ask another question. If we don’t get the answer to *why*, perhaps we should seek the answer to *who*. Who is this great God who is responsible for the beauty and grandeur of creation, who holds the billions of stars in place by the word of His power, and yet is so near that He hears my whispered prayer? Who is this God who loves the world so much that He gave His only Son that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish but have life everlasting? Who is this God who hung on a cross for your sins and mine and cried, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

I may not know all the *whys*, but I know the *who*, and I am satisfied.

**From Formal Ministry to Homemaker
Major Mind Renewal**

Over the next few years, the Lord took me through some reshaping and rebuilding as He transformed me into a wife, a mother, and a homemaker. To accomplish that end, He taught me to apply the scriptural principles I had learned in my journey to this new phase of my life. At this point, I'd like to elaborate on those principles that have been instrumental in my healing.

Some Principles Involved in Transformation

1. God's Word is true and good.
2. God's Word has the power to transform us into the image of Christ.
3. God's Word needs to get *in* us in order to have its transforming effect.
4. God's Word gets in us by hearing it and reading it.
5. God's Word becomes real and active in us by the illumination of the Holy Spirit.
6. God's Word grows in us in stages.
7. God's Word in us takes *time* to produce its effect.
8. God's Word in us must be *cultivated* and tended.
9. God gives the increase.

The last four principles can best be understood by comparing the Word to a seed in the soil as seen in Mark 4:28:

For the earth yields crops by itself; first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.

Like a seed, the Word in us must be cultivated for some time before the fruit is seen. This requires faith and perseverance before the fulfillment of the promise. You might wonder how you cultivate or tend the Word in your heart. Very simply, it involves believing it, meditating on it continually, and acting upon it obediently and expectantly. (I have found it very helpful to write down God's Word as I study. Other people regularly write down verses on index cards and carry them for frequent reference during the day.) Although you must be diligent in this process, be aware that it is God who gives you the will and power to cooperate. He alone causes growth.

Cultivation also requires the removal of hindrances and obstructions to growth. These may include unbelief, sin, carelessness and neglect, and preoccupation with the cares of this life. Again, the Holy Spirit will rid us of these obstacles as we are honest in His presence, confessing them and bringing them under the cleansing blood of Jesus (1 John 1:9).

There is one more principle that is absolutely key to being transformed by God's Word:

The Word must be trusted in and acted upon even when feelings shout against it.

God, as revealed in His Word, is the ultimate reality. That is what He means when He calls Himself "I AM". His Word is what is true regardless of what I see or feel. My feelings are circumstantial and dependent on many variables. God's Word is absolute. When my feelings conflict with the Word (as they so often do), it is the Word that is to be trusted, not my feelings. We are so tempted to gauge reality by our feelings. This is probably one of the biggest stumbling blocks to sincere Christians, particularly women who are so feeling-oriented by nature.

Going Deeper

Now I'd like to go deeper into those principles, since they're so important. But first, to be sure our foundation is firm, let's back up and review.

God has a purpose for each of us: that we be conformed into the image of His beloved Son Jesus Christ.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:29

Given our sinful human nature, this goal seems impossible. So God made it possible for us by giving us His nature through the death, resurrection, and glorification of His son Jesus of Nazareth (Romans 6).

Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, I am given the gift of faith, whereby I receive the power to believe in Jesus and accept Him in my heart as Savior. At that point, my old self becomes united with Jesus in His death; hence, it dies. Immediately, my spirit is resurrected with the life of the risen Jesus and He becomes Lord of my life. I now partake of His nature and receive as an inheritance all the promises of sonship, including glorification and authority. But (here's where the problem with growth begins!) it is more than likely that I do not *know* these things even though they are true. Therefore, I don't live according to this new creation reality; instead, I continue to live by habit according to my former way of thinking and choosing. Though I sincerely claim that Jesus is Lord of my life, in practice, I act as if I am still lord of my life.

Hence, over time, I become stalled in my growth, feel frustrated with my lack of progress, and mourn when I see the emptiness in my life that rivals the futility of my unbelieving friends. All the while, I wonder what's wrong—what did I miss.

I keep trying to become someone I think I'm supposed to be, never realizing that God has already made me into that someone. In fact, the only way I'll find out

who that someone is, is to keep looking in the mirror of God's Word. There, little by little, I will behold who He has already made me to be in Him, and in the process, I'll begin to think that way (the mind), make godly choices (the will), and feel right (the emotions). This will happen over time and each stage will be glorious because I'll be seeing Jesus more clearly, not only in His Word, but experiencing His life through me. Let's look at what Paul has to say about this:

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18

Adam Clark, in *The Bethany Parallel Commentary*, sheds more light on this verse when he says:

But we all, with open face. The Jews were not able to look on the face of Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, and therefore he was obliged to veil it. But all we Christians, with face uncovered, behold, as clearly as we can see our own natural face in a 'mirror,' the glorious promises and privileges of the gospel of Christ; and while we contemplate, we anticipate them by desire and hope, and apprehend them by faith, and are *changed* from the glory there represented to the enjoyment of the thing which is represented, even the glorious image—righteousness and true holiness—of the God of glory. *As by the Spirit of the Lord.* By the energy of that Spirit of Christ which gives life and being to all the promises of the gospel; and thus we are made partakers of the divine nature and escape all the corruptions that are in the world. This appears to me to be the general sense of this verse; its peculiar terms may be more particularly explained. The word *katoptrizomenoi*, which we translate *beholding... in a glass*, comes from *kata*; "against" and *optomai*, "I look"; and properly conveys the sense of looking into a mirror, or discerning by reflected light. Now as mirrors, among the Jews, Greeks, and Romans, were made of highly polished metal, it would often happen, especially in strong light, that the face would be greatly illuminated by this strongly reflected light; and to this circumstance the apostle seems here to allude. So by earnestly contemplating the gospel of Jesus and believing on Him who is its Author, the soul becomes illuminated with His divine splendor, for this sacred mirror reflects back on the believing soul the image of Him whose perfections it exhibits; and thus we see the glorious form after which our minds are to be fashioned. And by believing and receiving the influence of His Spirit our form is *changed into the same image*, which we behold there; and this is the image of God, lost by our fall, and now recovered and restored by Jesus Christ (p. 1063).

Whatever truth I'm looking at, whatever stage of development, or whatever struggles I'm in, I am to look at the verse that deals with my situation and know

that the Word is true and is good for me. I'm to see it as a promise that is *already true* about me positionally (that is, in my spirit by faith), and that God wants to make a part of my experiential life (my condition or daily walk that can be observed). Whatever is true and right, God would have me become that experientially. Oh what a joy it will be when I see that truth birthed in my experiential life. But, as with ordinary birth, there is conception, hidden growth, and contractions before the baby is seen in the light. Just so, I must persevere in beholding God's Word, being obedient to the light He has given, relying on His power working within me to accomplish His purpose. The Holy Spirit leads me into all truth (John 16:13). That means He leads me into the reality of all truth; and that's transformation. It's a process that continues my whole life; it's never over. As Paul said in Philippians 3:12: "*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*"

It is a glorious process of progressively seeing Jesus ever more and more as our all-sufficiency, as the One who truly satisfies. With each stage, I become more acutely aware of my desperate needs and inadequacy. At the same time, He leads me to look to Him to find that He more than meets my needs. What a joyful realization it is to know I have a friend who loves me and accepts me just as I am, but who has the will and the power to make me everything He designed and created me to be. All I have to do is surrender and cooperate with Him as He lives His life through me.

Key Truth: Jesus is my Lord

Now that brings me to a key truth—the hub of the wheel: Jesus Christ is Lord.

All of history and all of creation are moving toward the revelation and acknowledgment of that truth:

Every knee shall bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:10-11

Oh yes, it will happen. We will all see it with our eyes, hear it with our ears, and speak it with our lips—and it will be gloriously joyful. But it will not be joyful for all. To some, those who refused to recognize or acknowledge Jesus as Lord during their time on earth, it will be a day of terror and regret.

When Jesus walked the earth as a man, He asked His disciples two questions on the subject. First, He said, "Who do people say that I am?" Then He asked a more penetrating question: "Who do you say that I am?" We know He was not just talking about words here or paying lip service, because on another occasion, He said, "Not everyone who calls me Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father." In other words, my eternal destiny depends on my response to the gift of faith God gives me to receive Jesus as Lord of my life. If I truly receive Him as Lord, then I surrender my

independence and right to rule over my own life. When I initially acknowledge Him as Lord, I give Him ownership of my life. In other words, I sign over the deed of my life to Him. It is a life-changing decision. But it is played out day by day in myriad small decisions I make that truly allow Him to be Lord and Master of my life. To say it another way, He becomes Lord of my life positionally (and really) when I accept Him at salvation. But I only *experience* His lordship, drawing on His resources in my daily walk, as I obey His voice speaking to me through the Spirit in His Word. I allow Him, the sovereign and holy Lord, to say what is and what will be in regard to my life. His Word is the standard. "It is written" becomes the byword for me. All my decisions are made in light of His sovereign will revealed in His holy Word. I have given Him the right to *do* all and *be* all He chooses through me as He reveals it to me daily in His Word, and I truly live as He intended: in fellowship with God.

God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:9

...truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full. 1 John 1:3-4

As I do that, I continually experience dying to my will and living His glorious life within me. Therein is peace, and a joy that keeps growing from glory to glory. Therein is intimacy and oneness with the Lord of love that gloriously surpasses anything our hearts could ever hope for or imagine.

But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.' 1 Corinthians 2:9

Depth of Understanding

With that depth of understanding of the scriptural principles on which I was operating, you will more easily understand how I went through this next period of my life—the transition from single career woman to wife, mother, and homemaker. First, let me explain one more point. Earlier, I referred to the truth that Jesus Christ is my Lord as the hub of the wheel. Let me elaborate that truth by adding this verse to the hub:

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live; but Christ lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Galatians 2:20

That is what it means to me when I say that Jesus Christ is my Lord: He has taken up residence in me as the rightful owner; therefore, all that I do in this body, I do in obedience to and dependence on His Spirit living in me.

All the other truths are merely spokes on the wheel. They radiate from the central hub or truth that Jesus is Lord of my very person. His every word is my command.

First Peter 3:15 says “but in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.” In light of this 1 Peter passage, Bible commentator Gaebelien provides a perspective that relates well to this hub-and-spokes concept:

The Christians Peter is writing to are to acknowledge in their hearts Christ as the Holy One. In biblical revelation, the heart is the religious center of man. When the center of one’s life is rightly related to God, he is able to respond properly to the vicissitudes [change or variation] of life (p. 240).

Let me extend the analogy of the wheel just a bit further. Consider the rim to be my life. God has become the sovereign Lord or center (hub). If my wheel is to work effectively and smoothly, it must be in balance. To that end, God has given many precepts and truths (spokes) in His Word which, if observed, will keep my spirit, soul, and body functioning smoothly in a delicate and perfect balance. That way, as I roll along in life and bump into various obstacles (difficult circumstances), I’ll be able to glide over them without getting stuck. But, in fact, I often do get stuck. That is when I have a tendency to focus on the circumstance, thinking *it* is the real cause of the problem. I say, “If only I could get rid of this circumstance, everything would be all right.” All the while, I fail to look at my life and see the dented area on the rim. What that dent is showing me is the weak spot in the inner life. In other words, the spoke in that area is weak. There is a principle or truth in my belief structure that is weakened or out of joint. What I need to do is stop blaming the circumstance and strengthen the weak spoke by allowing the Holy Spirit time and space to work in me as I meditate on and practice that truth, believing that He will in fact bring my life into wholeness and balance.

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Hebrews 12:12-13

Reconsecrate Your Life

If, by reading this section, you realize that you have not placed Jesus as Lord at the center or hub of your life, you can acknowledge that to Him right now. All you need to do is acknowledge that you have gone your own way, confess, and be confident that the blood of Jesus cleanses your heart. You can begin a fresh commitment and relationship with Him as Lord.

You might want to pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus, I know that I’ve gone my own way rather than doing what I know You’d have me do. I am sorry, Jesus, and ask Your

forgiveness. I thank You that Your blood cleanses me from all sin. I choose now to walk in fellowship with You, Jesus, my Lord.

Becoming A Homemaker

Earlier, I mentioned that I stopped counseling when I was eight months pregnant with Esther. The decision to stop counseling came after I had been studying a passage in the book of Titus:

The older women, likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Titus 2:3-5

The Lord gave me light on this and I saw that my place was to be at home; so I took myself out of ministry. I had revelation or light on this truth, but at the time, I had no transformation of this truth. What do I mean by that? I mean that although the Holy Spirit clearly illuminated the truth of that Scripture to my spirit, my soul (mind, will, and emotions) was a thousand miles behind. Coming from a feminist background, I did not see any value in homemaking. My emotions were turbulent at this time because I considered housework to be meaningless. In fact, I felt a deep sense of depression and worthlessness just by doing the laundry. (Some of those feelings were no doubt linked to my childhood memories of spending long hours doing chores around the ranch, much too excessive for a young child.)

Here now is where the principles of transformation came into play. Although I kept feeling empty, lonely, and worthless in this new role, I kept looking at Jesus as my Lord. Throughout the day, I'd look to Him and remember His love for me and count on His grace (His power operating in me) to make His Word real and good in my life. I believed I could trust His Word to be true even though it didn't feel true. I also believed that if I kept looking at Him, trusting Him (the hub) and obeying His Word (the spokes), that He would eventually bring my feelings and thinking into harmony with His Word. May I testify that is exactly what has happened. Gradually, the feelings of emptiness and worthlessness were replaced with acceptance and ease and eventually were transformed completely into feelings of joy and fulfillment.

...after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings... do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise. Hebrews 10:32, 35-36

I came to love my role as homemaker. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Let me now describe to you how I see this role. I believe God has given me the privilege of creating the emotional atmosphere of my home. This includes but far

exceeds the responsibility of keeping the house clean and orderly. It is my privilege to help create an oasis of peace and grace for my family, where they are sheltered from the sometimes tumultuous and trying circumstances raging outside in our troubled world.

In the book of Titus, wives are instructed to love their husbands. The Greek word used there for love is *phileo*. *Phileo* love is the love of friendship, respect, warmth, and affection. The Lord has taught me how to demonstrate that kind of love to my husband. I give him *phileo* love by being warm and affectionate to him as I adapt myself and my schedule to him and his needs. Sometimes it means giving him his space so he can rest and become refreshed after work.

God also taught me to take my expectations to Him and not to burden my husband with them. Psalm 62 teaches, “Truly my expectation is from God alone. Trust in God at all times. Pour out your heart before Him.” Just as I learned contentment as a single woman, so God taught me to cultivate contentment as a married woman. What liberation and satisfaction I’ve found in this. I’ve learned not to put expectations on my husband; instead, I find contentment in looking to Jesus (1 John 1:3-4). This practice has a triple bonus: first, it frees me from anxiety and disappointment; second, I see every special favor that comes my way as a wonderful gift and blessing, and receive it with joy and thanksgiving instead of as my expected due; third, it takes the burden off Greg so that he feels free and eager to offer the very things I want. I have found God’s Word to be true, and oh so good!

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:1-2

A Precious Liberty

While the Lord was transforming my mind and emotions in regard to being a homemaker, He was also leading me into liberty in another area of truth: being submissive to my husband. Because of my history and consequent distrust of men, as well as the cultural milieu in which all late Twentieth Century women have been immersed, I found this to be a very challenging truth. As with all the other truths I find in God’s Word, I see this truth as a spoke emanating from the hub—the core truth that Jesus Christ is my Lord and therefore has my full permission to live His life in me. Therefore, His Word is authoritative and the absolute standard for my life.

By continually returning in my thinking to the hub, that sure foundation, my oftentimes shaky emotions became anchored. If God has said that it is good for wives to be submissive to their husbands, as He clearly does in Titus 2:5, Ephesians 5:22, and 1 Peter 3:5, then it must be good for me. But did my

feelings know that? Unfortunately not. They railed in fear at the thought: fear of being dominated, fear of losing my own self, fear of my husband's fallibility.

How well God understands our fears. Knowing that fear would be the root cause of difficulty for a wife in submitting herself to her husband, God specifically addresses it in His Word. His solution is to redirect our fear from our husbands to Him (1 Peter 3:2). He says not to be afraid of what submission to our husbands might entail. Rather, fear God Himself. Not a servile fear, but a fear of awe and reverence for the power and splendor of this majestic God who has loved me so intimately and taken such a personal interest in me. In other words, I'm to look continually to the Lord and obey "as unto Him" trusting that He will care for all my needs according to His riches in glory (Philippians 4:19).

Am I saying this was easy? Absolutely not. It involved a real dying to self and my own way of doing things. And dying is never easy! But the wondrous thing about being united with Christ is that death in Him assures resurrection to more of His glorious life. That is what I have found to be true.

That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Philippians 3:10-11

Little by little, I made conscious, deliberate choices to respect my husband and submit my will to his. I made those choices by faith, trusting that God is good and His Word is good for me regardless of how my feelings may protest. (And protest they did!) When the feelings of fear would rise up, I would deliberately look up to Jesus and remember that I was submitting "as unto the Lord".

The twelfth chapter of Hebrews was especially helpful:

...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. Hebrews 12:1-3

We each have our personal race to run which God has designed and engineered and set before us for our good. It is custom-tailored to suit us—not to suit our pleasure or convenience, but to specifically address those areas in our soul which can best be matured and developed by this personalized course. God is the ultimate personal trainer. He targets exactly those spiritual muscles which need strengthening so that we'll be prepared and equipped for the life challenges and good works which only He knows lie ahead of us.

He knows our tendency to grow weary, so He warns us of that pitfall and redirects our attention to Jesus who has gone before us in our race and who will be with us all the way to its conclusion. He tells us not to make light of this

maturing process (chastening), but to esteem its value in God's plan to bring us to maturity, as partakers of His very life (His holiness).

He knows that no chastening seems joyful when we're going through it; in fact, it's downright grievous. But in spite of that, it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained (exercised) by it. So He says:

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled. Hebrews 12:12-15

God knows us so well. He knows that during our trials (our personalized maturing program) our tendency is not only to grow weary and discouraged, but also to become bitter. So He tells us to pursue peace with all men. Seeing people as the cause of our trials may cause us to be bitter against them. He would have us see them as the instruments in His hand that He is using for our good to purify us and manifest His holiness in us. All the while, we are to count on His grace, His power at work in us, on our behalf, because of the unmerited favor He has lavished on us as His children.

Over time, the miraculous happened. I discovered complete liberty and joy in submitting to my husband. Who could have ever predicted the freedom I now enjoy in my relationship with Greg. I no longer fear losing myself to another. My husband and I dwell in blessed harmony.

"Yes," you might say, "but you were lucky. You have a godly husband who also walks in submission to God's Word and follows diligently the commands for husbands to 'love their wives, and cherish them, nourish them; treat them with the same care as they treat their own bodies; honor them; be understanding of them'" (see note at the end of this section**).

My answer to that is, "Yes, it is true. I have been blessed with a godly husband who does walk in obedience to God's Word regarding a husband's responsibility." But Greg did not always have the clarity of understanding that he walks in today. He too, was undergoing transformation. The blessed, harmonious marriage that we both enjoy was not in sight when I was learning submission. In fact, our first six years were very difficult for both of us, as we each had a lot to learn about walking in God's way and loving one another. Praise God, we did not give up the struggle or lose heart, but pressed on while God worked in both of our hearts. We have been enjoying the precious fruit of that labor for many years now.

But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. 1 Peter 5:10

In truth, the joy and liberty I now have in submitting to my husband has nothing to do with the gracious way that Greg has learned to treat me, as grateful as I am to him for that. No, my freedom comes from my dependence on God and my submission to Him in the person of my husband. There is great inner liberty in obeying God.

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. John 8:36

Since my submission is truly to the Lord, I am internally free with regard to Greg's actions. So often people exist in a yo-yo type of emotional state, reacting to the opinions and actions of others. It is easy for us to look for our identity in others and go up and down depending upon how we perceive their behavior toward us. This type of dependence creates an invisible bondage that holds us captive despite our exercise of independent choices. However, God has something better in mind for us. When our submission is to God, we are lifted above reacting to other people's opinions and actions to a realm of stability and constancy in His presence, where we draw on His life and joy.

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. John 15:11

** God's Word is very balanced despite the unbalanced way it is sometimes portrayed. When God directs women to be submissive to their husbands in Ephesians, He uses the metaphor of the human body. There can only be one head. This responsibility God has given to the husband. Therefore, He tells the wife to submit to her husband's leadership. Then He immediately gives instructions to the husband about how to treat his wife. He directs him to love his wife just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. How did Jesus give Himself? Philippians chapter 2 tells us that although He was equal with God, Jesus emptied Himself, even taking the form of a servant, and humbling Himself, becoming obedient to death on a cross. There is no lording it over anyone in the kind of servant leadership that Jesus exemplified. Jesus always put the well-being of His church before His own. He then told husbands to love their wives as their own bodies—to cherish and nourish them. This speaks of an affectionate, tender, protective love.

You see then, God doesn't speak of a woman's submission in a vacuum. He introduces it in the context of mutual submission to one another: the wife submitting and showing respect for the leadership of her husband; the husband sacrificing his will and self-interest for the benefit of his wife as he pours out his life and love in servant leadership in the family (Ephesians 5:22-33).

While this is the ideal to which all married couples should strive, the reality is that often the timing of this revelation is not simultaneous. That being the case, one

spouse may well be following God's order alone, an admittedly difficult assignment. The comforting truth is that God is faithful and able to do amazing things in the reluctant partner through the willing and obedient spouse. In the case of the wife's submission, what happens is that when she steps aside, giving the leadership of the home to her husband, she actually creates a place of leadership for her husband to fill. Her very act of trusting in God's sovereignty through her submission invites God's kingdom to reign in their home, thus releasing God's power to act in forging a harmonious marriage that truly reflects His love and character.

New Desires, New Hopes

As time passed, Greg and I continued to grow in our marriage. The Lord transformed my mind and heart so radically as a wife and mother that I began to desire another child. That posed a significant problem because of Greg's vasectomy. I told Greg of my desire and his response was most gracious. (Did this man ever imagine what he was getting himself in for when he married me?) The Lord spoke to both of our hearts that another child was in His mind for us and He gave us faith to believe for this.

God is Our Provider: He Guides Our Path

When we looked into the possibility of a vasectomy reversal, we discovered that it is a rather expensive procedure. We really didn't have the money since Greg was working at Inner City Life Ministries and we were living by faith on the donations of people who supported us in the ministry.

In God's providence, we were led to consult a Christian doctor at El Camino Hospital. The doctor saw God's hand on our lives when Greg gave his testimony of how we conceived our first child, Esther, shortly after the vasectomy. He believed in our leading to have another child and graciously offered to do the reversal without charge! (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2).

Shortly after that, we did conceive again. Twins! We were ecstatic. We felt so blessed. You can't possibly imagine the pain and disappointment we felt several months later when I miscarried. Or maybe you can. Some of you have walked that painful road as I have. You too, have no doubt asked that one word, "Why?" I did not receive an answer to that troubling question. But I believe some day I will. What I did receive was great comfort from my Lord. He spoke to me of the dignity and destiny of those little lives. He assured me from Psalm 139 that He was the One forming my babies in my womb and that His presence was ever with them from the moment of their conception. He said that "...their days were written before one of them existed" (Psalm 139:16). He showed me that the days of their earthly lives were to be lived out in my womb. I was greatly comforted, knowing that our babies were in the loving care of my Lord. He showed me that I was now the mother of three: one on earth and two in heaven. How close I found my Lord to be, binding us all together.

Joshua

In time I conceived again. This time we gave birth to Joshua. It was an extra blessing that he was born after only three hours of labor. Like Esther, Joshua has been a continual joy to our hearts. He fits his name so well, already demonstrating gifts of leadership and a heart that loves his Lord. Sometimes he amazes us with the depth of his insight.

After some time I wanted a third child. Again our hopes were crushed when one miscarriage followed another. After several miscarriages and all the accompanying pain and disappointment, God spoke to me through His Word that our family was complete (Ephesians 3:15). So we decided it was time for me to get my tubes tied. The miscarriages were deep trials for me with the Lord, but He never failed me; instead, He drew very close in intimacy with me. He also comforted me with the thought that now I was mother of a large family: two children on earth and the rest in heaven. How I anticipate that heavenly family gathering when all the Burts are reunited with our Lord who gave life to us all.

Chapter 7

Back in Formal Ministry

Ministering in the San Francisco Bay Area

Now that my children are older, I have more time to spend imparting the life-transforming truths I've found in God's Word. The Lord has given me opportunity to share those truths through writing, speaking, mentoring, teaching, and counseling. I continue to grow as I search the scriptures for the pearls of great price, for those treasures in His Word that are often hidden. Over the years, I have imparted those treasured truths to thirsting hearts. My deep desire is for those who are God's children to be unveiled to the glory of who He is, and for those who don't know Jesus, to see Him as their Lord and Savior. My long-range goal is someday to be able to minister these truths to people in the Third World so they might come to know the Lord as their healer and all-sufficiency.

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed. 1 Peter 2:24

...And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. Matthew 8:16-17

My newest role in life is as founder and director of Well of Life ministries, which was birthed in 1996 from a vision which God gave me for a biblical counseling, teaching, and healing ministry inspired by the passage about the woman at the well in John 4. In that passage, the woman was met by Jesus whose heart was touched by the woman's need. He was aware that this woman was looking for life and fulfillment in all the wrong places and meeting only with defeat. She was an outcast whose life was terribly empty. Jesus met her right where she was, helped her get in touch with her need, then satisfied her deepest thirst with living water. Well of Life Ministries includes counseling, seminars, and study materials for those who desire to learn more about the Lord's sufficiency and who they are in Christ.

Thanks to the goodness and mercy of the Lord, I now live a full life which grows even richer day by day as the Lord becomes more glorious in my eyes. I love my life with my husband, Greg, and enjoy the opportunity to minister together with

him. I'm so grateful for my two children, Esther and Joshua, who are both born again and share a deep love for the Lord. It is my privilege to pass on to them the truths of God's transforming love that I have learned to apply in my life and that have effected (and continue to effect) such a glorious change in me.

Only Jesus Truly Satisfies

Like the woman at the well, I have discovered the source of life, the living water. The purpose and meaning of life is no longer an unanswered question. I know who I am. The darkness of a life separated from God, the devastating loneliness, emptiness, and purposelessness that plagued my life for so many years simply are no more. The thirst for belonging, intimacy, meaning, and love has been filled in the person of Jesus Christ. What began as a fountain, over the years, has become a river of life whose banks have overflowed with the abundance of His person.

My desire is to share the water and impart to others the life-changing truths and the sufficiency of Jesus. I believe that the truth I have come to understand is not for me alone, but is to be communicated with others, for truly it is a communication of Jesus' presence and who He is. Like the woman at the well, who encountered Jesus, and received so deeply from Him that she left her waterpot and ran back to the city calling the people to "come", so I invite you to *come*. Come up higher to Jesus, the source of living water. "I pray that the eyes of your inner man be opened" to see that only Jesus truly satisfies.

AGAIN,

JESUS SAYS TO US,

... Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. John 4:13-14

Identity Truths

In Newness of Life, I am . . .

These identity truths are in alphabetical order for easy memorization.

In Christ, I am accepted

John 6:37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

Ephesians 1:6 ...to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

In Christ, I am adequate

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

In Christ, I am adopted

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Ephesians 1:5 ...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

In Christ, I am an alien and sojourner

Leviticus 25:23 The land shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me.

Psalms 39:12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry; do not be silent at my tears; for I am a stranger with You, a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

In Christ, I am baptized by the Holy Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body; whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

In Christ, I am blessed by the Lord

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.

In Christ, I am a bond-slave of Christ

1 Corinthians 7:22 For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave.

Ephesians 6:6 ...not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.

In Christ, I am born from above

John 1:12-14 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

1 John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

In Christ, I am a brother/sister of Christ

Hebrews 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

In Christ, I am called

1 Thessalonians 2:12 that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

2 Timothy 1:9 ... who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.

In Christ, I am a child of God

John 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

In Christ, I am chosen

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Ephesians 1:4 ...just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

In Christ, I am Christ's

1 Corinthians 3:23 And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

In Christ, I am cleansed/healed

1 Peter 2:24 ...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed.

1 John 1:7, 9 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

In Christ, I am clothed with Christ

Romans 13:14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

In Christ, I am complete

Colossians 2:9-10 For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

In Christ, I am dead to sin

Romans 6:11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In Christ, I am delivered from darkness

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

In Christ, I am an epistle of Christ

2 Corinthians 3:3 ...clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

In Christ, I am a fellow heir

Ephesians 3:6 ...that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.

In Christ, I am a fellow servant

2 Corinthians 3:6 ... who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Revelations 6:11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

In Christ, I am foreknown

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

In Christ, I am forgiven

Acts 10:43 "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Colossians 2:13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses.

1 John 2:12 I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

In Christ, I am freed from judgment

Romans 8:1-2 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.

In Christ, I am freed from the law

Romans 7:6 But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree").

In Christ, I am a friend of God

John 15:14-15 You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

In Christ, I am a gift to Christ from God

John 10:29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

John 17:10 And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.

In Christ, I am glorified

Colossians 1:27 To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Colossians 3:4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

In Christ, I am God's inheritance

Ephesians 1:11, 18 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

1 Peter 1:4 ...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.

In Christ, I am God's minister/ambassador

2 Corinthians 5:20 Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.

In Christ, I am God's people

1 Peter 2:10 ...who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

In Christ, I am God's witness

Isaiah 44:8 Do not fear, nor be afraid; Have I not told you from that time, and declared it? You are My witnesses. Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.

In Christ, I am God's workmanship

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

In Christ, I am a heavenly citizen

Ephesians 2:19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Philippians 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ, I am an heir of promise

Galatians 3:29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Hebrews 6:17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath.

In Christ, I am an heir of salvation

Titus 3:7 ...that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

In Christ, I am a holy nation

Exodus 19:6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

In Christ, I am a holy people

Deuteronomy 14:2 For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 26:19 ...and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken.

In Christ, I am a holy priesthood

1 Peter 2:5 ...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In Christ, I am identified with Christ

Romans 6:4-6 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

In Christ, I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit

2 Corinthians 1:22 ...who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

In Christ, I am an instrument/vessel

Acts 9:15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

In Christ, I am in the world but not of it

John 17:14-16 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

In Christ, I am joined to Christ

John 14:20 At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

Romans 7:4 Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another; to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

In Christ, I am a joint-heir with Christ

Romans 8:17 ...and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Galatians 4:7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

In Christ, I am justified

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 2:16 ...knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

Titus 3:7 ...that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

In Christ, I am a king and priest

Revelations 1:6 ...and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

In Christ, I am a kingdom of priests

Exodus 19:6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.

In Christ, I am known completely

Psalms 139:1-4 O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, And are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, But behold, O LORD, You know it altogether.

Hebrews 4:13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

In Christ, I am a lamb

Isaiah 40:11 He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young.

In Christ, I am light in the Lord

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-5 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.

In Christ, I am the light of the world

Matthew 5:14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

In Christ, I am a living stone

1 Peter 2:5 ...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In Christ, I am a member of Christ

1 Corinthians 6:15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!

Ephesians 5:30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

In Christ, I am a new creation

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

In Christ, I am an oak of righteousness

Isaiah 61:3 To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

In Christ, I am one spirit with the Lord

1 Corinthians 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

In Christ, I am on the rock/foundation (Jesus)

Matthew 7:24-27 Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: "And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock." But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: "And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

1 Corinthians 3:11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:20 ...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.

In Christ, I am a partaker of a heavenly calling

Hebrews 3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus.

In Christ, I am a partaker of the divine nature

2 Peter 1:4 ...by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

In Christ, I am a people for His own possession

Titus 2:14 ...who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

In Christ, I am perfect

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Hebrews 10:14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.

In Christ, I am a pillar of God's temple

Revelation 3:12 He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name.

In Christ, I am precious

Isaiah 43:4 Since you were precious in My sight, You have been honored, And I have loved you; therefore I will give men for you, and people for your life.

In Christ, I am predestined

Romans 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Ephesians 1:5 ...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

In Christ, I am promised suffering

Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

2 Timothy 3:12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

1 Peter 5:10 But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

In Christ, I am reconciled

Romans 5:11 And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.

Colossians 1:20 ...and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

In Christ, I am redeemed/ransomed

Isaiah 43:1 But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, and he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine."

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Ephesians 1:7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

In Christ, I am the righteousness of God

Romans 3:21-22 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

In Christ, I am a royal priesthood

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

In Christ, I am a saint

Psalms 16:3 As for the saints who are on the earth, "They are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."

In Christ, I am the salt of the earth

Matthew 5:13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

In Christ, I am sanctified

1 Corinthians 1:2, 30 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God; and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

Hebrews 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.

In Christ, I am secure

John 10:27-29 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.

Hebrews 13:5 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."

In Christ, I am a sheep of Christ

John 10:11, 14-15 I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

In Christ, I am a son/daughter

2 Corinthians 6:18 "I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

Galatians 3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 1:5 ...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

In Christ, I am Spirit taught

1 Corinthians 2:10, 13 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

In Christ, I am strong

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

In Christ, I am a temple of the living God

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

2 Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people."

In Christ, I am a translated into Christ's kingdom

Colossians 1:13 He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.

In Christ, I am the true circumcision

Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

Colossians 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.

In Christ, I am a vessel of honor

2 Timothy 2:21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

In Christ, I am a vessel of mercy

Romans 9:23 ...and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory.

In Christ, I am victorious

Romans 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

1 Corinthians 15:57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 5:4-5 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Suggested Reading

Alive for The First Time, David C. Needham

Birthright, David C. Needham

From Guilt to Glory, Ray C. Stedman

Handbook to Happiness, Charles R. Solomon

Principles of Spiritual Growth, Miles J. Stanford

Romans: An Exposition of Chapter 8:5-17, D.M. Lloyd-Jones

Soul & Spirit, Jessie Penn-Lewis

The Enthroned Christian, F. J. Huegel

The Principles of Position, Miles J. Stanford

What Shall This Man Do?, Watchman Nee

Bibliography

Birthright by David C. Needham; Multnomah Publishers, Inc.; copyright 1979, by David C. Needham. This book is out-of-print but an updated version is Alive for the First Time by David C. Needham; Multnomah Publishers, Inc.; copyright 1995; by David C. Needham. Used by permission.

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What Shall This Man Do? By Watchman Nee; Kingsway Publications, Ltd., copyright 1983. Used by permission.

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Notes of interest to the author re: Come Up

The following notes are a combination of FYI and general observation.

Disclaimer: My task does not include checking the accuracy of Scripture quotes or references or, other quoted material, including footnotes and related accuracies.
Disclaimer: I read through the MS as carefully as I could and did my best to catch all the typos and inconsistencies—yours and mine. Hope I got all of them. I remind you: the final authority on the book is you, so please ‘continue in vigilance.’
Standards: This book was edited according to the company style guide for capitalization, numeral use, punctuation, and spelling.
A nicely written book. You did a good job (both of you!).
When you recover from this exercise, you should consider making a brochure or booklet out of the “In Christ” chapter. With some careful editing, it would be suitable (careful in the sense that some entries may want to be re-visited as to their belonging in the list...).

Questions to the author re: Come Up

	Original, from manuscript	Comment, critique, suggestion
1		
2	California?!	Use one, not both
3	and bolstered by a false sense of courage by the amphetamines	To say “the” suggests you have mentioned it previously. Since this is not the case, I suggest you just write: and bolstered by a false sense of courage by amphetamines
4	We will look at this passage later in our study.	Did this happen?
5	as a <u>genetic</u> blueprint to limit my present	Suggest you use another word; ‘genetic’ suggests a pre-birth condition, which does not apply in this case.

6	MARK THIS—A CHRISTIAN	Please ensure your quote follows the author's original with caps or lack of caps.
7	Only Saints Go to Heaven	Is this your subhead or the author's? Appearing as it does in the middle of a block quote, it appears to be his. If it is <i>yours</i> , you have to close off the quote above and use a line or two to intro the following quote. I don't see any reference as to where the reader can find this quote in the author's book. Should be remedied with page numbers so the reader can look it up is so desired.
8	Again Needham says,	Reference to where in N's book needed.
9	me 'flesh' birth'	Weird punctuation. Please check against original.
10	AMP).	Better spelled out
11	He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them at the cross" (Colossians 2:15). I knew that " <i>faith cometh by hearing and hearing through the Word of God</i> " (Romans 10:17)	I don't get why some passages are italics and others not. One does not seem 'more important' or better suited for emphasis. I suggest there is a bit too much italics in this manuscript; you might want to consider using a bit less.
12	<i>Spirit-Filled Life Bible Kingdom Dynamics</i>	Correct title? Seems a little strange to me for the name of a Bible.
13	who are God's children to be unveiled to the glory of who He is,	The glory is veiled, not the people
14	Sometimes we don't get the answer we need because we need to ask another question. If we don't get the answer to why, perhaps we should seek the answer to who. Who is this great God who is responsible for the beauty and grandeur of creation, who holds the billions of stars in place by the word of His power, and yet is so near that He hears my whispered prayer? Who is this God who loves the world so much that He gave His only Son that whosoever would believe in Him would not perish but have life everlasting? Who is this God who hung on a cross for your sins and mine and cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."	Cool!
15	But we all, with open face.'	Please remove the ' if it is not supposed to be there. I don't have access to the original, so you will have to attend to this, please.

Come Up Higher

16	By the energy of that Spirit of Christ which gives life and being to all the promises of the gospel; and thus we are made partakers of the divine nature and escape all the corruptions that are in the world.	Reads funny; please check against original for completeness.
17	to the vicissitudes (change or variation) of life.	If the () is <i>your</i> elaboration, it has to be in []
18	I believed I could trust His Word true be true	Try: I believed I could trust His Word to be true
19	He knows our temptation to grow weary, our tendency is not only to grow weary and discouraged	We are not tempted to be weary, we are tempted to revel in it, to submit to it, to use it as an excuse. It is like saying, "We are tempted to become hungry." ← Here, you have a more-correct perspective
20	. My husband and I dwell in such blessed harmony that we truly are one flesh	You are mixing metaphors. The one-flesh bit is a physical thing. Harmony, blessed or otherwise, is mental.

21	despite our <u>apparent</u> exercise of independent choices	??
22	Isaiah 40:31	I saw this font on paper and found it hard to read.
23	Altha Burts Janet Prince	Usually written Altha Burts with Janet Prince
24	August 1997	Would look better with a 2005 date. Something eight years old kinda looks, well, dated!
25	filled with mountain emotional confusion	Please fix.

26	'you must be born again''	Please check against original
27	Perhaps this 'new personhood' idea, manifesting	You will notice I deleted all quotation marks to start and stop block indents (style rule). This means you will want to check incidents like this (see left) against the original to make sure you are following it for " or ' when used for emphasis. Here and in other block indent locations.
28	<i>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things have gone, the new things have come"</i> (2 Corinthians 5:17).	Italics in the original?
29	which are 'actual but not yet personally experiential.	Please check against original
30	my circumstances and trials are even worth something; they are working for me an eternal weight of glory. The circumstances in themselves have no eternal value	Does this appear contradictory to you?

31	FEELINGS must be answered by FACTS.	Does the original have CAPS
32	(Acts 1:3-8).	I don't get the connection of this verse with the text.
33	The Lord was teaching me to take authority in the areas of my life where there were strongholds (e.g., anorexia and bulimia) and I began to experience freedom.	As a reader, I thought this was addressed: over and done with. Here, it appears the problems have yet to be set aside. Chronology.
34	very carefully cultivated content	Try contentment
35	So here I was, at this otherwise happy time of life, anticipating marriage	Chronology: the reader has been told you are married.

36	To think that God knew the mother's love in my heart before it even existed	You may wish to address this incomplete sentence.
37	who holds the billions of stars in place by the word of His power Who is this God who hung on a cross for your sins and mine and cried, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."	Yes, I know Jesus is God, but given that the book of Hebrews identifies this person as Jesus, why not do so here? ← similar thinking
38	let's back up and review.	Does the reader need to know when the review is over and we are into new material?
39	'As by the Spirit of the Lord.'	I don't get why this is here; do you need to check against the original? Also, please refer to chart #27 again.
40	All of history and all of creation	The Phil 2 reference doesn't really support the full extent of this statement.

41	that she dropped her waterpot	My Bible says she just <i>left</i> it.
42	has made us accepted in the Beloved.	Why caps?
43	Ephesians 6:10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.	An exhortation does not make you something. Please re-evaluate.
44	In Christ, I am a mercy	Appears incomplete
45	<i>Soul & Spirit</i>	Does original use the & or the word <i>and</i>

46	<p>Bibliography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Biblio is not used to indicate you have obtained permissions. This goes at the front of the book (perhaps in Acknowledgements). Please consult with your project manager. ○ Notes about things being out of print etc. do not go in the Biblio. ○ Correct style for a bibliographic entry; a couple of examples—see below. ○ Note five-space indent for <i>second</i> line ○ Anyoletown is fictious ☺ ○ Note: no underlining; use <i>italics</i> <p>Needham, David C. <i>Birthright</i>. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1983.</p> <p>Huegel, F. J. <i>The Enthroned Christian</i>. Anyoletown, MA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1992.</p>	
47	Topical index	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ I assume these words will later be accompanied by page #s. ○ I don't see a reason for them to be caps
48	Come Up Higher	<p>The title is ok, I guess, but it doesn't grab me, especially after reading and enjoying the manuscript. I suggest you might want to consider a title more in keeping with the theme of the manuscript—love. Think about it. The book is full of God's love for you, of His love for us, of your love for God, Greg and your children.</p> <p>Suggestion:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>A Love Story</i> —unlike any other—</p>
49		
50		