Beauty for Ashes



Receiving Emotional Healing

Joyce Meyer

Beauty For Ashes: Receiving Emotional Healing Joyce Meyer Many people seem to have it all together outwardly, but inside they are a wreck. Their past has broken, crushed, and wounded them inwardly. They can be healed. God has a plan, and Isaiah 61 reveals that the Lord came to heal the brokenhearted. He wants to heal victims of abuse and emotional wounding.Joyce Meyer is a victim of the physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuse she suffered as a child. Yet today she has a nationwide ministry of emotional healing to others like herself. In BEAUTY FOR ASHES she outlines major truths that brought healing in her life and describes how other victims of abuse can also experience God's healing in their lives. You will learn:

- how to deal with the emotional pain of abuse
- how to understand your responsibility to god for overcoming abuse
- why victims of abuse often suffer from other addictive behaviors
- how to grab hold of god's unconditional love
- The importance of God's timing in working through painful memories.

JOYCE MEYER suffered for thirty-three years the devastating effects of abuse. Now God has exchanged her ashes for beauty and called her to help others allow Him to do the same for them.

Cover Design by UDG Design Works Cover Photo by Johner/Photonica Visit our Web site at www.twbookmark.comi Introduction^ your joy is hindered because of emotional pain, if you have been abused or have suffered from feelings of rejection, I encourage you to read this book. If you have ever listened to my radio or television broadcasts, you have heard me speak of the fact that I was abused throughout my childhood and teenage years. In fact, my life was like a heap of ashes before I met the Lord and was set free by the truth of His Word.

This is not a story of all the unpleasant details of my own past, but I do share enough about my earlier life to let you know that I understand what it means to feel hopeless and unloved. Years ago, God inspired me to share these truths in order to help set free other people who are in similar situations. Since the first release of this book, I have continued to hear from thousands of people who share that they need prayer and teaching in order to walk victoriously in the life God has planned for them. They testify that this book has helped them greatly.

Recently, the Lord encouraged me to expand the teaching in this book to further develop a solid foundation for people who are ready to let go of their past and to move on to the beautiful life God wants them to enjoy. Based on my own experiences, and the extensive studies I have done on behavioral

addictions caused by abuse, I share how God's love will override negative results from past abuse. I also share insight on the two kinds of pain that an abused person must face, the pain of change or the pain of staying the same, and six steps to achieve emotional healing.Running from the past does not lead to healing, so I identify several ways people run from the past so you can avoid delays in reaching your own victory. I will explain how to move forward through the doorways of pain that have become obstacles to the future.

If you need to let go of the past, and receive an inner strengthening from God that will enable you to trust others, develop and maintain intimate friendships, and enjoy your life again, then this book is for you. Once you begin, press on by reading through to the end of the book in order to reach the good news of the prize for which God has called you.

I know firsthand that God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. You can learn how to shake off trouble and receive a double recompense for all you have been through.

A woman was sharing how fear was keeping her from doing things that she needed to do. So her friend said, "Well, do it afraid." That was life-changing advice for me. Sometimes we have to face our fears and just "do it afraid."As we allow God to do so, He begins to straighten up our lives by untying "one knot of fear at a time." He helps us go through hard things and discover that His promises are true. We cannot spend our lives running away from everything we fear.

Some people are so afraid of elevators they will turn down a job that is located on an upper floor of a building. If they want the job, they need to get on that elevator, pray, go up a few floors, get off, breathe, and repeat the process until they overcome their fear. We need to overcome our fears that keep us from carrying out God's perfect will for our lives.

The Bible is full of scriptures that say, "Fear not," because God knew that Satan was going to try to use fear to keep His people from fulfilling their destiny in Him.

To some of His first disciples Jesus said, "I am the Way, follow Me." When you decide to follow Jesus, you will soon learn that He never turns back in fear. His path is always straightforward to the finish line. Do not be like the woman in my prayer line who always gave up halfway through the race. As difficult as it may be, decide to stay in the race and see it through!

Let Go of the PastI encourage people to let go of their past, but never to run from it. The only way to gain victory over the pain of our past is to let God walk us back through that doorway of pain and into victory. No one can achieve victory for us; we have to work out our own salvation. Paul explained this truth in his letter to the Philippian church, saying:

Therefore, my dear ones . . . work out (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ).

[Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight. (Philippians 2:12, 13)

We have to let God take us through things, and let Him work in us so our mess becomes our message. Difficult things that we have endured in our past prepare us for God's blessings in our future. Even Jesus had a time of training for His future. Hebrews 5:8-9 says, "Although He was a Son, He learned [active, special] obedience through what He suffered and, [His completed experience]

making Him perfectly [equipped], He became the Author and Source of eternal salvation to all those who give heed and obey Him."

There was a period in the life of Jesus in which we are told nothing about what was happening to Him. During this time we know that He was growing. We too have times of growth that we may not be able to talk about to anyone. It is an intimate time of growth that we must endure.

There may be things going on inside of us that we do not understand. But when we finally arrive at the place God wants to bring us, we will see how our past prepared us for what God wanted for us all along.

I like the story about the couple who went into an antique shop one day and found a beautiful teacup sitting on a shelf. They took it off the shelf, so they could look at it more closely, and said, "We really want to buy this gorgeous cup."

All of the sudden, the teacup began to talk, saying, "I wasn't always like this. There was a time when I was just a cold, hard, colorless lump of clay. One day my master picked me up and said, I could do something with this.' Then he started to pat me, and roll me, and change my shape.

"I said, 'What are you doing? That hurts. I don't know if I want to look like this! Stop!' But he said, 'Not yet.'

"Then he put me on a wheel and began to spin me around and around and around, until I screamed, 'Let me off, I am getting dizzy!' 'Not yet,' he said.

"Then he shaped me into a cup and put me in a hot oven. I cried, 'Let me out! It's hot in here, I am suffocating.' But he just looked at me through that little glass window and smiled and said, 'Not yet.'"When he took me out, I thought his work on me was over, but then he started to paint me. I couldn't believe what he did next. He put me back into the oven, and I said, 'You have to believe me, I can't stand this! Please let me out!' But he said, 'Not yet.'

"Finally, he took me out of the oven and set me up on a shelf where I thought he had forgotten me. Then one day he took me off the shelf and held me before a mirror. I couldn't believe my eyes, I had become a beautiful teacup that everyone wants to buy."

Submit to the Potter's Hands

God has an awesome plan for our lives, and sometimes He starts changing things so fast that we feel dizzy and disoriented, like a lump of clay on a potter's wheel. But we have to trust that He is working out what is best for us (see Romans 8:28). We need to just go with the flow and let Him make us into something beautiful. Isaiah understood this process when he wrote, "You have hidden Your face from us . . . Yet, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our Potter, and we all are the work of Your hand" (Isaiah 64:7-8).

To live a victorious Christian life, we have to be willing to let go of the past, die to self, forgive those who have hurt us, and let God take us on to the place of

promised blessings that He has prepared for us. No one can promise that everything we want to be different in our lives will be changed into what we want it to be. Some things may never change the way we want them to, but God can change us so much that we will not care.

Our comfort has to be in Christ. We need to forget about what others think about us, or what people have done to us in the past. We are to keep our attention on what God wants to do in us, and with us, and for us now. Paul wrote, "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28). Ietting go of the past involves looking to the future in a new way. In Galatians 2:20, Paul offers us a promise that we, who need to let go of past hurts, can now confess: "I have been crucified with Christ [in Him I have shared His crucifixion]; it is no longer I who live, but Christ (the Messiah) lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

We need to learn to be satisfied by being in God's will. The more we focus on who we are in Christ, the less it matters who we were in the past, or even what has happened to us. Paul said, "I count everything as loss compared to the possession of the priceless privilege (the overwhelming preciousness, the surpassing worth, and supreme advantage) of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord and of progressively becoming more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him [of perceiving and recognizing and understanding Him more fully and clearly]" (Philippians 3:8).

He added, "[For my determined purpose is] that I may know Him [that I may progressively become more deeply and intimately acquainted with Him, perceiving and recognizing and understanding the wonders of His Person more strongly and more clearly], and that I may in that same way come to know the power out flowing from His resurrection [which it exerts over believers], and that I may so share His sufferings as to be continually transformed [in spirit into His likeness even] to His death, [in the hope] that if possible I may attain to the [spiritual and moral] resurrection [that lifts me] out from among the dead [even while in the body]" (Philippians 3:10-11).There are deep places to discover in God, and there are deep places in us that only God can fill. We need to understand the power of God's resurrection, power that can lift us out from among the dead even while we live in the body. Just as the eagle rests its wings on the currents of the air to lift itself above the clouds, Christ will lift us above the storms of our lives.

We may have a goal to move toward perfection, but we will never arrive at that state until Jesus comes again. We are to accept ourselves, love ourselves, and enjoy the journey because we know God is working on our future all of the time.

Press On to What Lies Ahead

Paul went on to write:

Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ

Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own. I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]-.forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward" (Philippians 3:12-14, emphasis mine).

If you have been miserable because of the things that have happened in your past, I encourage you to do as I did and your focus in a new direction. Determine to be what God wants you to be, to have what God wants you to have, and to receive what Jesus died to give you. When you are ready for change, say, "I am not going to live in bondage anymore. I am not going to live in a box, comparing myself to others, and trying to be what they say I should be. I cannot do anything about what I have done in the past, but I can do something about my future. I am going to enjoy my life and have what Jesus died for me to have. I am going to let go of the past, and go on pursuing God from this day forth."

It takes maturity to let go of the past, but a mature Christian receives the fullness of God's blessings. You can forget old failures, old disappointments, and old relationships that did not work out. Instead, you can discover the new mercies that God is ready to give you every day because of the covenant He made with you when you put your trust in His Son Jesus Christ to save you.

King David searched for relatives of his predecessor King Saul because he wanted to bless them, simply because he had a covenant relationship with Saul's son Jonathan. In 2 Samuel 9 is the story of how David found Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, and brought him into the royal palace where he could take care of him. Mephibosheth did not do anything to deserve this protection and provision, except that he had a relationship to one who had a covenant with David.

This is a picture of why God cares for us. He blesses us because, as believers, we have a relationship with His Son. We do not deserve to be blessed. We do not earn blessings. We may even be crippled emotionally from some incident in our past. But God picks us up and restores us to our rightful place in His kingdom of peace.

God is not waiting for us to do all the right things before He blesses us. In fact, the most anointed prayer we can ever pray is, "Lord, help me." We cannot reach perfection apart from God. We must be totally dependent on Him to keep His promises in our lives. We are only called to be "believers"; otherwise, we would be called "achievers."The disciples asked Jesus, "What are we to do, that we may [habitually] be working the works of God? [What are we to do to carry out what God requires?]" (John 6:28).

Jesus replied, "This is the work (service) that God asks of you: that you believe in the One Whom He has sent [that you cleave to, trust, rely on, and have faith in His Messenger]" (v 29). Verses 1-12 of Psalm 51 offers a powerful

prayer for us to pray: have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to the multitude of Your tender mercy and lovingkindness blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly [and repeatedly] from my iniquity and guilt and cleanse me and make me wholly pure from my sin! For I am conscious of my transgressions and I acknowledge them; my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done that which is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified in Your sentence and faultless in Your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in [a state of] iniquity; my mother was sinful who conceived me [and I too am sinful]. Behold, You desire truth in the inner being; make me therefore to know wisdom in my inmost heart. Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean [ceremonially]; wash me, and I shall [in reality] be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness and be satisfied; let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my guilt and iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right, persevering, and steadfast spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence and take not Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit.

If we simply ask God, He will deliver us from the pain of our past mistakes and create in us a steadfast spirit. But while we do not have to do anything to receive God's deliverance, we can miss out on blessings if we run away from our problems without letting God bring us through them.

Moses looked for the easy way out of his problems after he had stepped out of God's timing. He had killed an Egyptian, and there had been a witness to the murder, so he ran into the wilderness to hide. Before God called Moses to go forward to the promised land, He told Moses to go back to Egypt (see Exodus 3:1-10), saying, "Because I have most assuredly seen the abuse and oppression of My people in Egypt and have heard their sighing and groaning, I have come down to rescue them. So, now come! I will send you back to Egypt [as My messenger]" (Acts 7:34).

God was sending Moses back to the people who had "denied (disowned and rejected)" him (Acts 7:35). His own people had mocked him, saying, "Who made you our ruler (referee) and judge?" (see Exodus 2:14). Moses probably was not excited about going back to face his problems in Egypt.

God does not always call us to go back physically to a place we have been. But if, for example, we have a difficult time submitting to a boss with a certain personality, God may call us to continue working with someone who has the same personality until we master the situation in a godly way. God does not want us to be on the run; He wants us to confront our fears and frustrations in

order to find peace in Him.

In 1 Kings 19, Elijah was running away when God told him to go back and finish what God had told him to do. When Jonah ran from his problems, he wound up in a whale's belly. When God delivered him from the whale, He told him to go back to Nineveh and deliver His message to the people there (see Jonah, chapters 1-3). If we try to solve our own problems without waiting on God, we can make bigger messes. Sarah did this when she convinced her husband Abraham to have a child with her handmaid Hagar rather than waiting for the child promised them by God (see Genesis 16). Hagar eventually ran away because of the way Sarah was treating her, but the Angel of the Lord told her, "Go back to your mistress and [humbly] submit to her control" (v. 9). He promised to bless her obedience by giving her many descendants (see v. 10).

God may be telling you to go back to the place of your frustration and pain, and allow Him to walk you through that doorway and into victorious living. Do not run from His invitation to emotional healing.

Ways People Run from Their Problems

It is common for people to run from their problems, because they do not want to take responsibility for their actions. Most people look for the easy way out, instead of looking for the right choice. Some people physically run away from their problems, going from marriage to marriage, or job to job. Some people mentally run away from their problems through the abuse of drugs and alcohol. But problems do not disappear by avoiding them.

Every choice we make brings results. If we choose never to clean house, eventually everything in it will deteriorate. If we choose not to go to the grocery store, sooner or later we will not have any food to eat. The problem is that we want to make wrong choices and get right results, but that does not work. We always reap what we sow (see Galatians 6:7-8). If we choose to do what is right, we will consequently break the cycle of problems that come against us. Some people run from problems by making excuses. When God tries to confront them with something, they make an excuse, saying, "Well, I am acting like this because I am tired." Or, "I act this way because I have been mistreated all my life." An excuse is a reason stuffed with a lie. The problem with excuses is that as long as we hold on to them, we will not see change.

Jesus told the story of a man who planned a great supper and invited many guests to come (see Luke 14:16-24), but one by one they made excuses for why they could not come. The first one said he was too busy with a piece of land that he had just bought. Another gave the excuse of buying oxen that needed to be examined, and another said he could not come because he had just got married. So the man invited all the poor, disabled, blind, and lame people in the streets and filled his house with people willing to be blessed. Those with excuses never tasted the great supper that had been prepared for them.

Another way people run from problems is by blaming others for everything that is wrong. Adam blamed Eve for eating the forbidden fruit; he even blamed

God for giving him the woman, while Eve blamed the serpent for misleading her (see Genesis 3). The Israelites blamed Moses for their misery in the wilderness and begged to go back to their place of bondage in Egypt (see Exodus 14:10-12).

I remember when I tried to blame everybody else for my problems. Everything was Dave's fault, or the fault of my upbringing. I had to see that I was my only real problem.

Jesus said, "Why do you stare from without at the very small particle that is in your brother's eye but do not become aware of and consider the beam of timber that is in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3). I enjoy a tremendous amount of freedom now, but it came through facing the truth about myself. God pointed out that I had a bad attitude, and my problems would not be solved until I changed. It hurt to change, but I had to face what God had revealed to me.

We will only get free by hearing the truth and doing what we hear God tell us to do. For example, if God tells you that you have a problem with jealousy, you will continue to miss out on blessings until you deal with it. You will have to start rejoicing when good things happen to other people. Whatever it is that holds you in bondage will have to be confronted with the truth before you can move on.

People also run from their problems by staying too busy. We can even get so busy doing church work that we do not take time to hear from God. I was in full-time ministry, helping people solve their problems, when God spoke to me and said, "Joyce you are so busy doing things for Me that you never spend any time with Me." I had to take an honest look at my time and stop doing many things that were not bearing fruit. Staying busy was helping me avoid issues I needed to deal with.

Paul prayed that we, the Church, would learn to sense what is vital:

And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and all keen insight [that your love may display itself in greater depth of acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment],

So that you may surely learn to sense what is vital, and approve and prize what is excellent and of real value, recognizing the highest and the best, and distinguishing the moral differences], and that you may be untainted and pure and unerring and blameless [so that with hearts sincere and certain and unsullied, you may approach] the day of Christ [not stumbling nor causing others to stumble]. (Philippians 1:9,10)We need to know what to say yes to and what to turn down. I have had to learn how to say no, because I want to make every day count that I have left in this life. Many times what looks good is the enemy of the better thing that is coming.

For example, God told one woman I know that she needed to stop spending so much time helping other people instead of spending time with her own child. We need to know what God wants us to do with our time, and we learn what He

wants by spending time with Him in prayer. If hearing from God is difficult for you, I encourage you to read my book titled How to Hear from God. In it I share many ways that God communicates with us, and how it always lines up with His Word and leads us to peace.

Procrastination is another common way to run from problems. We make excuses, blame others, and say we are too busy, and so we put off doing something God has told us to do. We think we will do it later, but later never comes. We "delay or turn a deaf ear," just as Isaiah warned in chapter 1, verse 23.

Haggai 1:2-7 shows what becomes of those who put off what God has told them to do:

Thus says the Lord of hosts: These people say, The time is not yet come that the Lord's house should be rebuilt [although Cyrus had ordered it done eighteen years before].

Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your panelled houses while this house [of the Lord] lies in ruins? Now therefore thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways and set your mind on what has come to you.

You have sown much, but you have reaped little; you eat, but you do not have enough; you drink, but you do not have your fill; you clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; and he who earns wages has earned them to put them in a bag with holes in it.

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways (your previous and present conduct) and how you have fared.

We have to motivate ourselves to do what God tells us to do, when He tells us to do it. Solomon wrote, "He who observes the wind [and waits for all conditions to be favorable] will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap" (Ecclesiastes 11:4).

If you look at your circumstances, you will put off doing what God is telling you to do. It can even seem like the worst time to do whatever God says to do, but there is an anointing on "now," if God has told you to act.

It is not good to spend our time running from problems. We need to slow down, discern what is vital, accept responsibility for our actions, and if need be simply say, "I was wrong, and I am sorry." We must not let procrastination rob us of God's blessings.

If we want to enjoy God's best for our lives, we must stop making excuses, stop blaming others, and stop being too busy to do what God says to do. He may tell us to give, help, pray, forgive, apologize, or something else. But whatever it may be, we need to learn to be "now people" who hear God and act quickly when He speaks to us.

Redeemed and Made Righteous Jesus Christ gave His life that we might have righteousness-or as I like to write it, Righteousness. Righteousness is meant for all who believe with personal trust and confident reliance on Jesus Christ (the Messiah)" (Romans 3:22).

Speaking of Jesus, Peter wrote, "He personally bore our sins in His [own] body on the tree [as on an altar and offered Himself on it], that we might die (cease to exist) to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

We were created by God to feel right and good about ourselves. But the devil wants all of us to feel wrong about ourselves; he wants us to feel shame, guilt, and condemnation. Because of the presence of sin in the world, and the sin nature that came upon us through the fall of mankind, we cannot do everything right.

To resist the devil's temptation to live in constant regret instead of continual victory, we must know and understand the truth of God's Word. When we accept Jesus as our Savior, He imparts or gives to us the gift of righteousness, and by faith, we are made right with God. We are not made right with God because of our own perfection or good works; we are considered righteous because of our trust in Jesus Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 the apostle Paul tells us what God did for us: "For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in and through Him we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness]."

God sent Jesus to redeem us (that is, to buy us back from the devil to whom we had sold ourselves as slaves to sin), to restore us (to make us as we were supposed to be in the beginning). We were created and redeemed by God for righteousness, not shame, guilt, and condemnation.

No Condemnation in Christ

If we read and understand the Word of God, we can be set free from wrong thinking about ourselves. Paul wrote in Romans 8:1: "THEREFORE, [there is] now no condemnation (no adjudging guilty of wrong) for those who are in Christ Jesus, who live and] walk not after the dictates of the flesh, but after the dictates of the Spirit."

Of course, if we would follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, we would never do anything wrong, so guilt would have no place to take root in us. However, since we are human, none of us is incapable of making a mistake. As our Lord pointed out, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41 kjv).

We cannot perform perfectly, even though we would like to, but we can live free from guilt by walking in the Spirit. The Lord promises to lead us through life, if we listen to Him and obey Him: "Listen to and obey My voice, and I will be your God and you will be My people; and walk in the whole way that I command you, that it may be well with you" (Jeremiah 7:23, emphasis mine).We sin when we stop doing what the Holy Spirit guides us to do. Condemnation and guilt feelings come as a result of that sin, because the devil sees an opening and immediately moves to rob us of our confidence in God's grace. If we ever hope to live without guilt, we must deal with the temptation to sin as soon as we are aware of it.

If you do give into temptation or fall into sin, instead of trying to restore yourself through good works, which is walking after the flesh (your human nature), ask God to forgive you and choose to turn back to the Spirit. You sin because you stop following the leading of the Holy Spirit. If you keep following the flesh, you will only get deeper and deeper into trouble and turmoil. Instead, turn back quickly to following the Spirit, allowing Him to lead and guide you in correcting your situation.

The Spirit always has the correct answer for every problem-and He will not condemn you when you return to Him. It is written: "For God has not appointed us to [incur His] wrath [He did not select us to condemn us], but [that we might] obtain [His] salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah)" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

For example, the Spirit will lead us to repentance, which produces forgiveness from God: "If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature and promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action]" (1 John 1:9).Following the flesh will lead to works that supposedly win the right to receive God's favor. But the flesh always attempts to repay for mistakes rather than simply receive God's gift of pardon and restoration.

Dealing with Guilt

The Lord once gave me a great revelation about guilt. I had felt guilty as long as I could remember. Guilt was my constant companion. We went everywhere together! This sin-consciousness began early in my childhood when I was being sexually abused. Even though my father told me that what he was doing to me was not wrong, it made me feel dirty and guilty. Of course, as I got older and became aware that it was wrong, but had no way to make it stop, the guilt continued and increased.

I learned firsthand that guilt is an unbearable burden, a heaviness that depresses the spirit. Guilt makes everything seem dark and makes us feel tired and weary. Actually it drains our energy and saps the strength we need to resist sin and Satan. So the result is that guilt and condemnation actually increase sin.

I believe that I was addicted to guilt. Before I learned about God's grace, I can never remember being guilt-free! Even if I was not doing anything particularly bad or sinful, I found something to feel wrong about.

Satan wants to press us down. He is the accuser of those who believe in Christ; he continues to bring charges against us before God (see Revelation 12:10). But David, the psalmist, wrote, "You, O Lord, are a shield for me, my glory, and the lifter of my head" (Psalm 3:3).

For example, I was shopping one day, and my ever-present companion of guilt was with me. I do not recall what I had done wrong this time; it does not even matter, it was always something. I was about to get out of my car and go into a store when the Holy Spirit said to me, "Joyce, how do you plan to get forgiveness for this sin?"l knew the right answer. I said, "I'll accept the sacrifice Jesus made for me when He died at Calvary." We can know the right answer (have head knowledge), and still not apply it to our own situation.

Then the Holy Spirit continued: "I see, Joyce, and when do you plan to accept Jesus' sacrifice?"

A major revelation began to shine forth in me! At that moment I knew that I could wait two or three days until I felt guilty long enough and then accept God's forgiveness, or I could receive that pardon right then.

I always asked for forgiveness for my sins right away, but I never accepted it until I felt that I had suffered enough to pay for it. God revealed to me what I was doing, how much unnecessary pain I was causing myself. He even showed me that what I was doing was insulting to Jesus, that in essence I was saying, "Lord, the sacrifice of Your life and blood was good, but not good enough. I must add my work of feeling guilty before I can be forgiven."

That very day I began getting free from guilt and condemnation. I encourage you to do the same. Remember: Guilt does no good at all! It accomplishes

nothing, except the following:

Guilt drains your energy and can even make you physically or mentally ill.

Guilt blocks your fellowship with God. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, "For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to understand and sympathize and have a shared feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation, but One Who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning. Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace (the throne of God's unmerited favor to us sinners), that we may receive mercy [for our failures] and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it]."Guilt, as a work of the flesh, demands that you try to pay for your sin.

Guilt drains your spiritual energy. It leaves you weak and unable to resist new attacks from the enemy. Successful spiritual warfare requires wearing of the "breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14 kjv, emphasis mine). Guilt causes you to sin more.

Guilt exerts such tremendous pressure on you, suggesting that getting along with others is difficult. It is nearly impossible to live under a burden of guilt and still operate in the fruit of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22, 23).

Surely you can see from this list that guilt is a good thing to give up. Let it go! It is from the devil and is intended to prevent you from ever enjoying your life or your relationship with the Lord.

If you have a serious problem in this area of guilt, you may need to ask someone to pray for you. If your faith is strong enough, pray for yourself. However, guilt steals faith; if you have lived for a long time buried under a load of guilt and condemnation, your faith may need to be strengthened. Get the help you need. Refuse to live any longer pressed down under a burden of guilt and condemnation.6

What about Shame? Now that we have a better understanding of guilt, let's turn our attention to the subject of shame.

There is a shame that is normal and healthy. If I lose or break something that belongs to someone else, I feel ashamed of my mistake. I wish I had not been so careless or negligent. I am sorry, but I can ask for forgiveness, receive it, and then go on with my life. Healthy shame reminds us that we are human beings with weaknesses and limitations.

In Genesis 2:25 we read that Adam and Eve were naked in the Garden of Eden, and they were not ashamed. Besides the fact that they were not wearing any clothes, I believe this verse means that they were totally open and honest with each other, hiding behind no masks, playing no games. They were completely free to be themselves because they had no sense of shame. Once they had sinned, however, they went and hid themselves (see Genesis 3:6-8).

People should be able to enjoy perfect freedom with each other and with God, but very few are able to do so. Most people pretend. They produce false

personalities and hide behind them. They act as if they are not hurt when they are, or they pretend that they do not need anyone when they do.

There is a poisonous shame that can drastically affect the quality of a person's life. This occurs when an individual who is being abused or mistreated in some way begins to internalize the shame he feels. He is no longer just ashamed of what is being done to him, but he becomes ashamed of himself because of what he is being subjected to.

Such an individual takes the shame into himself where it actually becomes the core of his being. Everything in his life becomes poisoned by his emotions so that he develops into a shame-based person.

At one time I was shame-based, but I did not know I was ashamed of myself. I was seeing the results of shame in my life, but was unsuccessfully trying to deal with the fruit of it rather than the root. The implied definition of the word translated ashamed in the King James Version of Genesis 2:25 is: to be disappointed, or delayed ...confounded."7

This word confounded simply means to be frustrated or confused. Webster’s New World Dictionary defines the verb confound as: "confuse"; "bewilder"; "damn."8Webster defines the verb damnas: "to condemn to an unhappy fate"; "doom"; "to criticize adversely"; "to cause the ruin of; "make fail."9

If you will take the time to really study these definitions, you may discover that the root of your problem is shame.

Dealing with Shame

My life was filled with confusion because I was trying desperately to do right (so I could "feel right"), but no matter how hard I tried, I always failed. It seemed as if I were doomed to failure. I did not fail at everything, however. I was successful in the corporate world, and in a few other areas, but I was a failure at godly behavior. I always felt defeated because no matter what I accomplished on the outside,Istill felt bad about myself on the inside.

I was ashamed of me!

I did not like who I was. I did not like my basic personality. I was continually rejecting my real self and trying to be someone or something I was not and never could be. (I will discuss this topic more fully in another chapter.)

Multiplied thousands of Christians spend their entire lives in this pitiful condition-living far, far below their rightful position as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ. I know, because I was one of them.

Paul wrote that the suffering we endure now will one day be worth the glory of the inheritance due to us: And if we are [His] children, then we are [His] heirs also: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [sharing His inheritance with Him]; only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory.

[But what of that?] For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (this present life) are not worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and in us and for us and conferred on us! (Romans 8:17-18)

It was a great day when the Holy Spirit led me to understand that shame was the source of many of my problems! There are promises in the Word of God that assure us that we can be delivered from a sense of shame. For example, it is written in Isaiah 61:7: "Instead of your [former] shame you shall have a twofold recompense; instead of dishonour and reproach [your people] shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double [what they had forfeited]; everlasting joy shall be theirs."

Let's examine more closely this passage, which offers "a twofold recompense." A recompense is a reward or compensation for injury. In other words, if you trust God and do things His way, He will see to it that you are repaid for every injustice ever done to you. You will receive double what you have forfeited or lost, and everlasting joy will be yours! That is a wonderful promise, and I can vouch for the reality of it. God has done that very thing for me, and He will do it for you too.

Another promise from the Lord is found in Isaiah 54:4: "Fear not, for you shall not be ashamed; neither be confounded and depressed, for you shall not be put to shame. For you shall forget the shame of your youth, and you shall not [seriously] remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore."How inspiring and encouraging it is to know that you will forget the harm of your past and will never have to seriously remember those hard, hard times! This is even a promise that you can stand on if you are still

being abused or mistreated.

Perhaps you feel that the Lord has told you to endure for a season some verbal or emotional abuse while He is doing a work in the person who is hurting you. How can you protect yourself from developing a shame-based nature? The prayer of the psalmist can be yours also: "O keep me, Lord, and deliver me; let me not be ashamed or disappointed, for my trust and my refuge are in You" (Psalm 25:20).

God can keep you from shame. I suggest that every time you suffer from verbal or emotional abuse, simply pray and ask God to keep you from the shame that tries to build up within you. Use this word in Psalm 25:20 as a double-edged sword against the enemy (which in this case is shame).

Following is an example of how this approach will work for your benefit. I know a pastor's wife who has no problems at all in her sexual relations with her husband, even though relatives sexually abused her for many years. On the other hand, as a result of my sexual abuse, I had many, many problems to confront and overcome in my sexual relations with my husband.

What made the difference? While questioning my friend, I discovered that throughout her childhood she had maintained a strong faith in God. The abuse began when she was about fourteen years of age. By that time she had already enjoyed many years of good Christian fellowship and an active prayer life. She prayed each time her abusers molested her, asking God to cover her so it would not affect her sexual relationship with her future husband. She knew that one day she was going to marry a pastor because the Lord had already revealed it to her. Her prayers protected her from shame and bondage in that area.

In my case, I did not know enough about God to activate my faith through prayer. Therefore I did suffer from shame-until I discovered that I was shame-based and learned about God's promise to deliver me.You can also be delivered from shame, which is the source of many complex inner problems, such as:

Alienation

Compulsive behaviors (drug/alcohol/substance abuse; eating disorders; addiction to money, work, or other objects or activities; sexual perversions; excessive need to be in control; lack of self-control or self-discipline; gossiping; judgmental spirit; etc.)

Depression
Deep sense of inferiority ("There-is-something-wrong-with-me" thinking)

Failure syndrome

Isolating loneliness

Lack of confidence

Neurotic behavior (A neurotic person assumes too much responsibility; in times of conflict he automatically presumes that he is at fault.)

Perfectionism
Timidity (fear of all types)
Inability to develop and maintain healthy relationships

Depression

What we believe in our heart about ourselves deeply influences how we act: "For as he [a person] thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7, paraphrased). If we think poorly of ourselves, we will be depressed.

Extreme numbers of people suffer from this terrible condition of depression, which has many complex causes, one of which is shame. If you are prone to depression, it may be a sign of a deeper problem-a root of shame. Those who are shame-based think and speak negatively about themselves. Such wrong thinking and speaking places a heavy weight on the spirit. This is a major problem because God created human beings for righteousness, love, and acceptance. God is always pouring forth these virtues upon His children, but many of His children do not know how to receive them.

You cannot receive love and acceptance from God if you are against yourself. If you have a problem in this area, do not just sit by and allow the devil to destroy you. Confront your spiritual enemy with spiritual action. Change your thinking and your speaking. Begin purposely to think and say only good things about yourself. Make a list of your best qualities and what the Word says about you, and confess it several times a day.

Meditate on truths from God's Word such as: "For our sake He made Christ [virtually] to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in and through Him we might become [endued with, viewed as being in, and examples of] the righteousness of God [what we ought to be, approved and acceptable and in right relationship with Him, by His goodness]" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Then say, "lam the righteousness of God in Christ."

Say out loud "God loves me" when you read, "For God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world that He [even] gave up His only begotten (unique) Son, so that whoever believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him shall not perish (come to destruction, be lost) but have eternal (everlasting) life" (John 3:16).

Read Romans 12:6-8: "Having gifts (faculties, talents, qualities) that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them: [He whose gift is] prophecy, [let him prophesy] according to the proportion of his faith; [he whose gift is] practical service, let him give himself to serving; he who teaches, to his teaching; he who exhorts (encourages), to his exhortation; he who contributes, let him do it in simplicity and liberality; he who gives aid and superintends, with zeal and singleness of mind; he who does acts of mercy, with genuine cheerfulness and joyful eagerness." Then confess, "I have gifts and abilities given to me by the Lord."Ponder in your heart the words of the Lord when He said, "Because you are precious in My sight and honored, and because I love you, I will give men in return for you and peoples in exchange for your life"

(Isaiah 43:4). Rejoice as you admit, "I am precious and valuable to God."

Search the Word of God for other positive confessions about yourself.

Another wise practice is to get a thorough medical examination to rule out the possibility of any physical condition that may be affecting your mental and emotional outlook. Unless your depression is caused by some health problem, it can usually be traced to negative thinking and speaking. Even when the depression is caused by some physical condition (hormonal or chemical imbalance, etc.), the devil will take advantage of the situation. He will offer many negative thoughts, which, if received and meditated upon, will only make the problem seem many times worse than it actually is.

I repeat: When you feel depressed, check your thinking. It is not God's will for you to be depressed. Align your thoughts with the Word of God. Isaiah 61:3 says that the Lord has given us "the garment [expressive] of praise instead of a heavy, burdened, and failing spirit." Nehemiah said, "The joy of the Lord is your strength and stronghold" (8:10). Believe what the Word says you are, and that is what you will become. Believe what the devil says you are, and you will become that. The choice is yours: "therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

Shame causes self-rejection and, in some cases, self-hatred. In more extreme cases, it can develop into self-abuse, including self-mutilation. I have ministered to several people who have shown me scars on their bodies from their cutting, burning, or biting themselves, as well as bruises from their beating or hitting themselves, and bald spots from their pulling out their own hair. Some people even starve themselves as a form of punishment. Others behave in an obnoxious manner so they will be rejected. Since they have rejected themselves, they are convinced that others will also reject them, so they manifest behavior in accordance with what they believe about themselves. The list of potential problems goes on and on, but lam sure you see the point lam making:

You cannot get beyond your own opinion of yourself-no matter how many good things God may say about you in His Word. Regardless of all the wonderful plans God may have for your life, none of them will come to pass without your cooperation. You need to believe what God says.

Accept God's Opinion of You

If you are seeking recovery from abuse, you must not allow other people's opinions of you, as evidenced by the way you have been mistreated in the past, to determine your worth. Remember, people who feel worthless always try to find something wrong with you so they can feel a little better about themselves. Keep in mind that this is their problem, not yours.

In John 3:18, the Lord Jesus states that no one who believes in Him will ever be rejected by Him or His heavenly Father. If God accepts you because of your

faith in His Son Jesus Christ, then you can stop rejecting yourself and let your healing process continue.

It maybe that you are not totally rejecting yourself, but only parts of yourself that are displeasing to you. In my own case, I rejected my personality. I did not understand that I had a divine calling on my life to full-time ministry and that God designed my basic temperament for what He had for me to do.

My personality was flawed, of course, due to the years of abuse I had suffered, and was in need of Holy Spirit adjustment, but it was still the basic personality that God had chosen for me. However, because I did not understand that fact, I thought I had to become totally different. I was constantly trying to be someone else, which was not God's will for me-nor is it His will that you become someone else.

Remember: God will help you be all you can be-all you were originally designed to be. But He will never permit you to be successful at becoming someone else.

The Spirit-Controlled Temperament Perhaps you have observed another persona friend or a spiritual leader-and said, "He is the way people ought to be" or "She is liked and accepted by everyone."You may have even tried to be like that individual without consciously planning to do so.

Of course, other people can be good examples to us, but even if we pattern ourselves after their good qualities, it must still be our own personal "flavor" of those good traits that characterizes us.

I have a bold, straightforward, decisive, take-charge personality. God instilled that type of nature in me to help me fulfill His call upon my life. However, for many, many years I struggled and lived in frustration because I kept trying to be more timid, mild, gentle, quiet, and sweet. I tried desperately not to be so assertive and aggressive.

The truth is that I vainly tried to model myself after my pastor's wife, my husband, and various friends whom I respected and admired. My efforts only resulted in increased frustration, which made me even more difficult to get along with. I needed to learn to quit trying to be like others and simply become "the best me I could be." Yes, I did need change. I did need more of the fruit of the Spirit-especially kindness, gentleness, and meekness-because I was too hard, harsh, and abrasive. But once I learned to accept my basic, God-given temperament, then I was able to let the Holy Spirit begin to change me into what He wanted me to be.

Once we quit striving to be like others, then the Spirit is able to use our strengths and to control our weaknesses. Then we begin to develop a "Spirit-controlled temperament." This temperament is explained in Galatians 5:22-25:

But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within

accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, Gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraint, continence). Against such things there is no law [that can bring a charge].

And those who belong to Christ Jesus (the Messiah) have crucified the flesh (the godless human nature) with its passions and appetites and desires.

If we live by the [Holy] Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. [If by the Holy Spirit we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit.]

Many years have passed since I finally learned that I had to accept and love myself, not hate and reject myself. I have since discovered the secret to developing the Spirit-controlled temperament. The key is spending quality personal time with the Lord and receiving help from Him on a regular basis.

Strengthened in the Inner Man

I still have weaknesses in my natural man; however, as long as I abide in the Lord, seeking Him first, He continually imparts to me the power I need to manifest my strengths and not my weaknesses.

The apostle Paul prayed that the believers would be strengthened "in the inner man," that the Holy Spirit would indwell their innermost being and personality:

May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality].May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love,

That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it];

[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you maybe filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]! (Ephesians 3:16-19)

This is our great need, to be strengthened in our "inner man" by the presence of God Himself. God told Paul, "My grace (My favor and lovingkindness and mercy) is enough for you [sufficient against any danger and enables you to bear the trouble manfully]; for My strength and power are made perfect (fulfilled and completed) and show themselves most effective in [your] weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. This means that when we are weak in a certain area, we do not have to hate or reject ourselves because of it. Like Paul, we have the great privilege of admitting our weaknesses and asking the Holy Spirit to control them.

In my flesh, I still have a tendency to be sharp, rude, and blunt. By the grace, strength, and power of the Lord, however, I am able to manifest "the fruit of the Spirit" and to be kind, pleasant, understanding, and longsuffering.

That does not mean that I never fail. Like everyone else, I slip and make mistakes. But I have come to understand that I do not have to be perfect in order to receive acceptance, love, and help from the Lord. Neither do you. God is for you! He wants you to be for you. The devil is against you, and he wants you to be against you.

Are you for yourself or against yourself? Are you cooperating with God's plan for your life, or with the devil's plan for you? Are you in agreement with

God or with the enemy?

Accepted in the Beloved

God chose us as His beloved, adopted children, setting us apart as His own:

Even as [in His love] He chose us [actually picked us out for Himself as His own] in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy (consecrated and set apart for Him)' and blameless in His sight, even above reproach, before Him in love.

For He foreordained us (destined us, planned in love for us) to be adopted (revealed) as His own children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the purpose of His will [because it pleased Him and was His kind intent]-

[So that we might be] to the praise and the commendation of His glorious grace (favor and mercy), which He so freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:4-6)

In Exodus 19:5, the Lord tells His people that they are His own "peculiar possession and treasure." That word applies to us today as much as it did to the children of Israel. In John 3:18, Jesus told Nicodemus that no one who believes in Him will ever be condemned (rejected). You may not feel treasured, or even acceptable, but you are. In Ephesians 1:6 kjv, Paul says that all of us who believe in Christ have been "accepted in the beloved." That should give us a sense of personal value and worth. l remember standing in a prayer line where I overheard a woman next to me telling the pastor who was ministering to her how much she hated and despised herself. The pastor became very firm with her and in a strong manner rebuked her, saying, "Who do you think you are? You have no right to hate yourself. God paid a high price for you and your freedom. He loved you so much that He sent His only Son to die for you ... to suffer in your place. You have no right to hate or reject yourself. Your part is to receive what Jesus died to give you!"

The woman was shocked. I was shocked too, just listening. Yet sometimes it takes a strong word to get us to realize the trap that Satan has set for us.

Self-rejection and self-hatred can almost seem pious in a sense. They can become a way of punishing ourselves for our mistakes, failures, and inabilities. We cannot be perfect, so we reject and despise ourselves.

I ask you to think of these prophetic words in Isaiah 53:3, which describe our Lord Jesus Christ: "He was despised and rejected and forsaken by men, a Man of sorrows and pains, and acquainted with grief and sickness; and like One from Whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we did not appreciate His worth or have any esteem for Him."

Do you lack appreciation for your own value and worth? Surely, you are valuable; otherwise your heavenly Father would not have paid such a heavy price for your redemption.

Isaiah 53:4-5 goes on to say that Christ "has borne our griefs (sicknesses, weaknesses, and distresses) and carried our sorrows and pains [of punishment], yet we [ignorantly] considered Him stricken, smitten, and afflicted by God [as if with leprosy]. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our guilt and iniquities; the chastisement [needful to obtain] peace and well-being for us was upon Him, and with the stripes [that wounded] Him we are healed and made whole. ‘The "healing package" purchased by Jesus with His blood is available to all who will believe and receive. That package includes the healing of the emotions as well as the body. If a person has done wrong, justice demands rejection, despising, and condemnation. However, Jesus bore all that for us, just as He bore our sins. What a glorious truth!

Since Jesus bore your sins on the cross, along with the hatred, rejection, and condemnation they deserved, you do not have to reject or hate yourself anymore.

The day I started our ministry, I asked God, "What do You want me to teach at the first meeting?"

He said, "I want you to tell My people that I love them."

I argued, "Oh, I want a message of power." That's what I said! I wanted to be God's woman of power for the hour. I wanted something that would just stun people with great revelation. I said, "Everybody knows You love them. I can't go preach John 3:16."

He said, "No, very few of My people know that I love them. If they did, they would act a whole lot different than what they do."

The Bible says, "There is no fear in love [dread does not exist], but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror! For fear brings with it the thought of punishment, and [so] he who is afraid has not reached the full maturity of love [is not yet grown into love's complete perfection]. We love Him, because He first loved us" (1 John 4:18-19). I understood that if God's people knew how much He loved them, they would not be fearful. If they knew the love of God, they would not run from Him, they would run to Him.

So for a year after that first teaching, I meditated on the love of God. I would drive in my car saying, "God loves me. God loves me. He loves me, me. The Creator of the universe loves me." The first book that I wrote was a result of spending this year of focus on God's love. It is called Tell Them I Love Them. Once you understand that God loves you, you can love yourself in a balanced way. Look at yourself in the mirror and say to yourself, "God loves you." Receive and accept yourself; tell yourself frequently, "I accept you."

After saying, "You shall love the Lord your God," Jesus added, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30-31). If you cannot get along with or love yourself, you will find it too difficult to get along with or love anyone else. Let the healing love of God do a work in your life.

Give yourself a hug sometimes, simply as a reminder that God loves you, and therefore you are lovable. Wrap your arms around yourself and say: "I no longer reject myself! Instead, I accept myself in Christ. I love myself, not selfishly but in a balanced way. lam not perfect, but with the help of the Lord lam improving day by day."

What about Rejection from Others?

Most likely, sooner or later, you will experience some form of rejection. Not everybody will like you. Some people may even aggressively dislike you. It is

extremely helpful that you develop a mature attitude in this area.

We know that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man (see Luke 2:52). In my own case, l ask God for favor with Him and with people, and I believe that He provides it. I suggest that you do the same. Here is a prayer to help you achieve an acceptable attitude:

Today, Lord, lam going to do my best, with Your help, and for Your glory. realize that there are many different people in the world with a variety of opinions and expectations. Improbably will not please all of them all of the time. I will concentrate on being a God-pleaser and nota self-pleaser or a man-pleaser. The rest I leave in Your hands, Lord. Grant me favor with You and with men, and continue transforming me into the image of Your dear Son. Thank You, Lord. No one enjoys being rejected, but all of us can learn to handle rejection and get on with our lives, if we remember that Jesus was also rejected and despised. He gained the victory over rejection by being faithful to God's plan for His life.

Rejection from other people wounds our emotions. It certainly hurts, and yet, for our own sake, we must remember that, if we are born again, the Helper (the Holy Spirit) lives in us to strengthen, undergird, and comfort us.

I think we spend valuable time and energy trying to avoid being rejected. We become "pleasers of men" (see Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:22).

After all, we reason, if we can keep everyone else happy, they will not reject us.

To avoid pain, some of us build walls around ourselves so we will not get hurt, but that is pointless. God has shown me that it is impossible to live in this world if we are not willing to get hurt. People are not perfect; therefore they hurt and disappoint us, just as we hurt and disappoint others.

I have a wonderful husband, but occasionally he has hurt me. Because I came from such a painful background, the moment that kind of thing happened, I used to put up walls to protect myself .After all, I reasoned, no one can hurt me if I don't let anyone get close to me. However, I learned that if I wall others out, I also wall myself in. The Lord has shown me that He wants to be my Protector, but He cannot do that if lam busy trying to protect myself. He has not promised that I will never get hurt, but He has promised to heal me if I come to Him rather than try to take care of everything myself.

If you build walls around yourself out of fear, then you must tear them down out of faith. Go to Jesus with each old wound and receive His healing grace. When someone hurts you, take that new wound to Jesus. Do not let it fester. Take it to the Lord and be willing to handle it His way and not your own.

Receive this scripture as a personal promise from the Lord to you: "For I will restore health to you, and I will heal your wounds, says the Lord, because they have called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no one seeks after and for whom no one cares!" (Jeremiah 30:17).

Confess with the psalmist: "Although my father and my mother have forsaken me, yet the Lord will take me up [adopt me as His child]" (Psalm 27:10).

With the help of the Lord, you can survive rejection and find your completion "in Him."

Rejection's Effect on Relationships A person who has a root of rejection in his life is usually handicapped in relationships. In order to sustain healthy, loving, lasting relationships, a person must not fear rejection. When this fear becomes the motivating factor in the life of an individual, he will spend his time trying to avoid rejection rather than building healthy relationships.

Nobody goes through life totally escaping moments of feeling rejected. Everyone experiences some rejection. However, if there has been enough of it to leave scars, it may cause the individual not only to function abnormally in his relationship with others, but also in his relationship with God.

He may come to believe that he is loved conditionally. Feeling that he must earn the love of others, he may devote his life to trying to please them. He may fear that if he does not please them, they will withdraw their love from him, reject him, or even abandon him.

Memory of the pain of such experiences often prevents personal liberty in relationships. People who have a fear of rejection, and the resulting loneliness and abandonment, usually end up allowing themselves to be controlled and manipulated by others. Since they believe that acceptance is based on performance, they are consumed with doing rather than being. Because they are afraid of simply being themselves, they spend their lives pretending-pretending to like people they detest, pretending they enjoy going places and doing things they hate, pretending that everything is fine when it is not. Such people live in continual misery because they are afraid to be honest enough to confront the real issues of life. Pretending! Pretending! Pretending!

Since people who fear rejection do not believe that they are lovable in themselves, often they will use the world's standards (money, status, clothes, natural talents, etc.) to prove to themselves and others that they are valuable. They live a life of misery, always trying to prove that they have worth and value.

No matter how much outward success a person may enjoy, he is not truly successful unless he knows who he is in Christ. Philippians 3:3 exhorts us to "exult and glory and pride ourselves in Jesus Christ, and put no confidence or dependence [on what we are] in the flesh and on outward privileges and physical advantages and external appearances." It is important to remember that appearance is only the way we look, not the way we really are.

A person who is rejection-based is unable to receive love even when it is

being freely offered to him. If he is able to accept love at all, it is only when he believes that he has earned it by behaving perfectly.

I remember a woman who once worked for my husband and me. She had grown up in an atmosphere of performance-based acceptance. When she did well in school, her father showed her love; when she did not do as well as he expected, he withheld his love from her. He behaved this way not only with his daughter but with other family members as well; therefore she learned that love was given as a reward for perfect performance and withheld as punishment for mistakes. Like most people, she grew up not even realizing that her feelings and belief systems were in error. She assumed that all relationships were handled in this same way. Since she was an employee of our ministry, there were occasions when I would ask her how her work was progressing, if she had everything caught up, or if there was any job that she had been given that she was unable to get finished.

I began to notice that whenever I inquired about anything that this woman had not yet completed, she would begin to act very strangely. She would withdraw from me, avoid talking with me, and appear to work at a frenzied pace-all of which made me feel uncomfortable. Actually, I felt rejected.

I knew that as her employer I was entitled to the privilege of asking about her workload without having to go through a traumatic ordeal each time. So I finally confronted her about the situation, which only caused our relationship to become more strained and confused. It was obvious that neither of us really understood the root of the problem.

This was a woman who truly loved the Lord. She was intensely serious about her relationship with Him, so the situation provoked her to pray and ask God for some answers about her behavior. Too often we blame our bad behavior on someone else instead of seeking the Lord to get to the root of the problem so we can be set free.

The woman received a revelation from God that changed her entire life. The Lord showed her that because her father had rejected her when she did not perform perfectly, she mistakenly believed that everyone else was the same way. If any of her work was not fully completed by the time I inquired about it, she was convinced that I was rejecting her because I no longer loved her; therefore she withdrew from me. I had not stopped loving her, but she had stopped receiving my love, and so I too ended up feeling rejected. We often do this same thing with the Lord. His love for us is not based on anything we do or do not do. In Romans 5:8, Paul tells us that God loved us when we were still in sin; that is, when we did not know Him at all-or even care.

God's love is always flowing to all those who will receive it. But like this employee who could not receive my love, often we reject God's love when we feel that we do not deserve it because our performance is less than perfect.

Fear of Being Rejected Causes Rejection of Others

If you cannot believe that you are basically a lovable, valuable person, you will be unable to trust others who claim they love you. If you believe that you must be perfect to be worthy of love and acceptance, then you are a candidate for a miserable life, because you will never be perfect as long as you are in an earthly body.

You may have a perfect heart, in that your desire is to please God in all things, but your performance will not match your heart's desire until you get to heaven. You can improve all the time and keep pressing toward the mark of perfection, but you will always need Jesus as long as you are here on this earth. There will never come a time when you will not need His forgiveness and His cleansing blood.

Unless you accept your value and worth by faith through Christ, you will always be insecure and unable to trust those who want to love you. People who have no capacity to trust suspect the motives of others. I know this is true because I had a real problem in this area. Even when other people told me they loved me, I was always waiting for them to hurt me, disappoint me, fail me, or abuse me. I figured that they must be after something; otherwise, they would not be nice to me. I just could not believe that anyone would want me just for myself. There had to be some other reason! I felt so bad about myself, was so full of shame, condemnation, self-hatred, and self-rejection, that whenever anyone tried to show me love and acceptance, I thought to myself, Well, if this person likes me now, he won't when he gets to know the real me. Therefore I would not receive love from other people, or from God. I deflected it by my behavior, which became more and more obnoxious as I set out to prove to everyone that I was as unlovable as I believed myself to be.

Whatever you believe about yourself on the inside is what you will manifest on the outside. If you feel unlovely and unlovable, that is how you will behave. In my case, I believed that l was not lovable, so that is how I acted. I was very difficult to get along with. I believed that other people would eventually reject me, and so they usually did. Because my attitude was manifested in my actions, I could not sustain healthy, loving, lasting relationships.

The "Prove-You-Love-Me" Syndrome

Whenever anyone did try to love me, I heaped great pressure on that person to prove it to me-continually! I needed a fresh fix of positive "strokes" every day just to maintain a good feeling about myself. I had to constantly be complimented about everything I did; otherwise, I felt rejected. If I did not receive the reinforcement I craved, then I felt unloved. I also had to have my way about everything. As long as other people agreed with me and gave in to my desires, I felt good about myself. However, if anyone disagreed with me or denied my requests, even to the slightest degree, it prompted an emotional reaction causing me to feel rejected and unloved.

I placed impossible demands on those who did love me. I frustrated them. I was never satisfied with what they were giving me. I could not allow them to be honest with me or to confront me. My entire focus was on me, and I expected everyone else's focus to be on me also. I was actually looking to people for my sense of self-worth, which is something that only God can give.

I have since learned that my sense of worth and value are in Christ, and not

in things or other people. Until I learned that truth, however, I was very unhappy and totally incapable of maintaining healthy relationships.

Receiving the love of God is a key factor in emotional healing, as I mentioned in an earlier chapter. Once a person genuinely comes to believe that God, Who is perfect, loves him in his imperfection, then he can begin to believe that other people might love him also. Trust begins to develop, and he is able to accept the love that is being offered to him.

Since I have believed and received God's love for me, my most basic needs for love and a sense of self-worth have been met. I no longer require other people to keep me "fixed" all the time, that is, feeling secure about myself. Like everyone else, I do have needs that I want people to meet; we all need encouragement, exhortation, and edification. But now there is no need to look to other people for affirmation of my value.

Now if my husband fails to compliment me on something I have done, I may be disappointed-but not devastated-because I know that I have value apart from what I do. Everyone likes to be recognized and complimented on what he does, but it is wonderful to be able to keep from falling apart if I do not receive that recognition and those compliments! Once I learned that my value and worth are not in what I do, but in who I am in Christ, I no longer feel that I have to perform for people. I have decided that either they will or will not love me for who I am. Either way, I am secure knowing that God still loves me.

It is important to be loved for who we are and not for what we do. When we know that we have value in our identity rather than in our performance or behavior, we are able to get our minds off what others are thinking about us all the time. We can focus on them and their needs, instead of expecting their focus to be continually on us and our needs. This is the basis of healthy, loving, and lasting relationships.

Confidence Be Yourself

Confidence has been defined as the quality of assurance that leads one to undertake something; the belief that one is able and acceptable; the certainty that causes one to be bold, open, and plain. If you think about this threefold definition, you will see why the devil attacks anyone who shows any degree of confidence.

People who have been abused, rejected, or abandoned usually lack confidence. As we have already mentioned in previous chapters, such individuals are shame-based and guilt-ridden and have a poor self-image.

The devil begins his assault on personal confidence whenever and wherever he can find an opening, especially during the vulnerable years of childhood. Even while a child is still in the womb, the devil initiates his ultimate goal of total destruction of that person. The reason is simple: An individual without confidence will never step out to do anything edifying to the kingdom of God or anything detrimental to Satan's kingdom, and therefore will never fulfiII the plan of God for his life. Expected Failure + Fear of Failure = Failure

Satan does not want you to fulfill God's plan for your life because he knows that you are part of his ultimate defeat. If he can make you think and believe that you are incapable, then you will not even try to accomplish anything worthwhile. Even if you do make an effort, your fear of failure will seal your defeat, which, because of your lack of confidence, you probably expected from the beginning. This is what is often referred to as the "Failure Syndrome."

No matter how many wonderful plans God has in mind for you, there is one thing you must know: God'sability to bring His will to pass in your life is determined by your faith in Him and in His Word. If you truly want to be happy and successful, then you must begin to believe that God has a plan for your life and that He will cause good things to happen to you as you put your trust in Him.

The devil wants you and me to feel so bad about ourselves that we have no confidence in ourselves. But here is the good news:We do not need confidence in ourselves-weneed confidence in Jesus!

I have confidence in myself only because I know that Christ is in me, ever present and ready to help me with everything that I attempt to do for Him. A believer without confidence is like a jumbo jet parked on the runway with no fuel; it looks good on the outside, but has no power on the inside.

With Jesus inside us, we have the power to do what we could never do on our own.

Jesus died for our weaknesses and inabilities, and He is willing to impart to us His strength and ability as we place our confidence (our faith) in Him. In John 15:5, He teaches us this important principle: "Apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing."Once you learn this truth, when the devil lies and says, "You can't do anything right," your response to him can be, "Perhaps not, but Jesus in me can; and He will, because I am relying on Him, and not on myself. He will cause me to succeed in everything

that I put my hand to" (see Joshua 1:7).

Or should the enemy say to you, "You're not able to do this, so don't even try, because you will only fail again, just as you have in the past," your response can be, "It is true that without Jesus, I am notable to do one single thing; but with Him and in Him I can do all that I need to do" (see Philippians 4:13).

Whenever the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future. If you read the Bible all the way through to the end, you will see that the devil's future is very bleak. Actually, he is already a defeated foe. It is written in Colossians 2:15, "[God] disarmed the principalities and powers that were ranged against us and made a bold display and public example of them, in triumphing over them in Him [Christ] and in it [the cross]" (emphasis mine).

You can resist the devil's temptation to live in fear and regret, because Jesus triumphed over his plans, and made a public display of his disgrace in the spirit realm. Satan is operating on borrowed time, and he knows it better than anybody (see Revelation 12:12). The only power he has to use against us is what we give him by believing his lies.

Always remember: The devil is a liar!

Speaking of Satan, Jesus said, "He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a falsehood, he speaks what is natural to him, for he is a liar [himself] and the father of lies and of all that is false" (John 8:44).

The Lie about Self-Confidence Everyone talks about self-confidence. All kinds of seminars are available on confidence, both in the secular world and the church world. Confidence is generally referred to as "self-confidence" because we all know that we need to feel good about ourselves if we are ever to accomplish anything in life. We have been taught that all people have a basic need to believe in themselves. However, that is a misconception.

Actually, we do not need to believe in ourselves-we need to believe in Jesus in us. We do not dare feel good about ourselves apart from Him. When the apostle Paul instructs us to "put no confidence in the flesh" (see Philippians 3:3), he means just what he says-do not put confidence in yourself, or in anything you can do apart from Jesus.

We do not need self-confidence; we need God-confidence!

Many people spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find that when they get to the top, their ladder was leaning against the wrong building. Others struggle, trying to behave well enough to develop a measure of confidence in themselves, only to endure repeated failures. Both of these activities produce the same results: emptiness and misery.

I have found that most people fall into one of two categories: (1) They never

accomplish anything, no matter how hard they try, and end up hating themselves because of their lack of achievement, or (2) they have enough natural talent to accomplish great things, but take all the credit for their achievements, which fills them with pride. Either way, they are a failure-in the eyes of God.

The only truly successful person in God's eyes is the individual who knows he is nothing in himself, but everything in Christ. Our pride and boasting are to be in Jesus alone, and He is to have all the glory (credit due) for whatever accomplishments we may achieve.

In actuality, every person does have confidence (faith). The Bible confirms this fact in Romans 12:3. We are all born with a certain amount of faith; the important thing is where we put it. Some put their faith in themselves, some in other people, some in things-and then there are those who actually put their faith in God. Do not be concerned about yourself, your weaknesses, or your strengths. Get your eyes off of yourself and onto the Lord. If you are weak, He can strengthen you. If you have any strength, it is because He gave it to you. So either way, your eyes should be on Him and not on yourself.

Without true confidence (in Jesus), you will create many complicated problems for yourself. Here is a partial list:

You will never reach your full potential in Christ (as we have discussed in detail).

Your life will be ruled by fear and filled with torment.

You will never know true joy, fulfillment, or satisfaction.

You will grieve the Holy Spirit Who is sent to bring God's plan to pass in your life but Who is never able to do so without your cooperation.

You will open for yourself many doors of endless torment: self-hatred, condemnation, fear of rejection, fear of failure, fear of man, perfectionism, people-pleasing (which eliminates the possibility of being a God-pleaser), control and manipulation by others, *etc.*

You will lose sight of your right to be an individual-the right to be yourself.

This last danger is the one I would like to examine now. We have looked at the others to some degree in the first part of the book, but this last one is of major importance and deserves more consideration.

Confidence to Be an Individual ln 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 and Romans 12:4-6, Paul teaches us that all of us make up one body, yet each of us is an individual member of that body. This is a truth that is very important for us to grasp because we make ourselves miserable and stifle the power of God in us when we try to be something or someone we were not designed to be.

We have often heard it said that we all came out of different molds, meaning that no two of us are exactly alike. There is nothing wrong with being different

from each other! God had a purpose in creating each of us differently. If He had wanted us to be alike, He could easily have made us that way. Instead, our uniqueness was so important to Him that He even went to the extreme of giving each of us a different set of fingerprints!

Being different is not bad; it is God's plan!

We are all part of one plan, God's plan. Yet each of us has a different function, because each of us is an individual.

I define individual as separate, distinguished by specific attributes or identifying traits, distinct or unique.

For years I thought I was weird-now I know that I am unique! There is a big difference. If I were weird, it would indicate that something about me got messed up and did not turn out the way it should have; while my being unique indicates that there are no others like me, and therefore I have special value. You should believe that you are unique, special, and valuable.

Don't Try to Be Someone Else

One of my unique identifying traits is my voice. Most women have soft, sweet voices, but mine is deep and firm. Quite often when someone who does not know me calls our home, he will think the man of the house has answered the phone. I was not always comfortable with this very unique trait; in fact, I was insecure about it. I thought my voice was just plain weird! When God called me to teach His Word, and I began to realize that I would one day be speaking over public address systems (loud speakers) and even have a radio and television ministry, I was terrified! I thought that surely I would be rejected because I sounded so different from the way I thought a woman should sound. I was comparing myself with what I perceived as normal.

Have you ever compared yourself with someone else? How did it make you feel?

We are not to compare ourselves with others, but let Jesus be our example and learn to reflect the presence and personality of the God Who indwells us.

Diamonds have many facets. God is like a flawless diamond, and each of us represents a different facet of Him. He has placed an expression of Himself in each of us, and we corporately make up His Body. What if our bodies were totally made up of mouths or ears, arms or legs? We would have no trouble speaking or hearing, carrying, or walking, but what about the other functions? What a mess we would be if it had been God's intention to make us all exactly alike.

Why is it that we struggle so much trying to be like someone else, instead of simply enjoying who we are? Because we believe the lies of the devil. We believe him, that is, until we hear the truth of God's Word, and the truth that we believe sets us free.

God's grace will never be available to you to become another person. He created you to be you-the best "you" you can be! Forget about trying to be someone else. That is always a mistake, because usually the person you choose to be like, the person who "has it all together," is not the way you Let me give you some

examples: Example One

At one point in my life I decided that my pastor's wife was the "ideal woman." She was (and still is) a sweet lady: petite, cute, blonde, soft-spoken, gentle, mild, and endowed with the gift of mercy. I, on the other hand, with my deep voice and straightforward, blunt personality, did not seem very sweet, gentle, mild, or merciful. I tried to be that way, without much success. I actually attempted to lower the volume level of my voice and change the sound of it to seem more "feminine," but I only ended up sounding phony.

This lady and I could not seem to get along. Though we wanted and tried to be friends, it just did not seem to work out. Finally, a confrontation between us revealed that I was not really enjoying her because her presence put me under pressure to be like her. The really interesting thing that we both discovered was that Satan had sold her the same pack of lies I had bought; she was struggling to be more like me! She was trying to be less fragile and more forceful, to deal with people and things more directly and with greater boldness. It is no wonder that we could not have a successful relationship-we were each being pressured by the other!

Remember this: God said that we "shall not covet"(Exodus 20:17)-and that includes someone else's personality.

Example Two

My next-door neighbor was a sweet girl who was gifted in many different ways. She sewed, had a garden and canned vegetables, played guitar and sang, did various kinds of arts and crafts, wallpapered, painted, wrote songs-in short, all the things I could not do. Since I thought I was "weird" anyway, I did not appreciate the talents I did have. I only thought about what abilities I lacked and all the things I could not do. Since I was called by God to teach and preach His Word, my desires were different from those of many of the women I knew. While they were attending interior decorating parties, I was home praying. I was very serious about everything. It seemed to me that there was something very heavy going on inside me. While other women were relaxing and having a good time, I was constantly comparing myself to them, always feeling that something had to be wrong with me. This kind of feeling occurs when people are shame-based and insecure about who they are in Christ.

I did need to learn to "lighten up" a bit and have some fun, but God was doing something in me that needed to be done. He was causing me to see the mess that some people's lives were in, and calling me to help them out of that mess through His Word. I needed to be affected by the weight and seriousness of other people's problems.

I was in a waiting period during which God was not using me; it was a time of preparation, stretching, and growing which lasted about one full year. During that year I decided it was time for me to become what I called a "regular woman." I bought a sewing machine and took some sewing lessons. I hated it, but forced myself to continue. Sewing was not something at which I excelled either. When a person has not been gifted in an area, he is just plain no good at it.

Sewing was such a struggle for me! I kept making mistakes that caused me to feel even worse about myself. I finally managed to get through enough sewing lessons to make a few garments for my family, which they dutifully wore.

I also decided that I should grow and can tomatoes. They were just beginning to look good, almost ready to be harvested, when a swarm of bugs attacked them overnight and left huge black holes in all of them! But I was determined to can tomatoes because I had already purchased all the canning equipment. So I went to the farmers' market and bought a bushel of tomatoes! I worked and sweated, sweated and worked, until I finally got those tomatoes canned! Once again, I hated and despised every second of it, but thought I was proving that I was "regular. ‘Through these very painful experiences, I learned that I was miserable because God would not help me be something that He had not created me to be. I am not to be someone else-l am to be me, just as you are to be you.

Be Yourself!

You have a right to be yourself! Do not let the devil steal that right from you!

If someone you know is a good Christian example in manifesting the character of the Lord or the fruits of the Holy Spirit, you may Want to follow his example. The apostle Paul said, "PATTERN YOURSELVES after me [follow my example], as I imitate and follow Christ (the Messiah)" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Following a person's example is entirely different from trying to be like that individual in personality or gifts.

I strongly encourage you to think this over: Are you accepting the fact that you were not created like everyone else, that you are a unique individual? Are you enjoying your uniqueness, or are you at war with yourself as I was?

So many people are waging a private war inside themselves, comparing themselves to almost everyone they come near, which causes them to judge themselves or the other person. They conclude either that they should be like other people, or that others should be like them.

Lies.'

None of us should be like anyone else. Each of us should be the facet of the Lord that He intends for us to be-uniquely individual-so that corporately we may accomplish God's plan and bring glory to Him.

Forgiveness Frees You to Live Again Receiving forgiveness for past mistakes and sins, and giving others for their mistakes and sins, are two of most important factors in emotional healing.

Forgiveness is a gift given to those who do not deserve it.

God wants to begin our process of forgiving those who hurt us by giving us the gift of forgiveness first. When we confess our sins to Him, He forgives us of our sins, puts them away from Him as far as the East is from the West, and remembers them no more.

When you are tempted to look back, remember the promises of these scriptures:

If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just (true to His own nature an promises) and will forgive our sins [dismiss our lawlessness] and [continuously] cleanse us from all unrighteousness [everything not in conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action]. (1 John 1:9)As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

As a father loves and pities his children, so the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him [with reverence, worship, and awe].

For He knows our frame, He [earnestly] remembers and imprints [on His heart] that we are dust. (Psalm 103:12-14)

Whereas this One [Christ], after He had offered a single sacrifice for our sins [that shall avail] for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until His enemies should be made a stool beneath His feet.

For by a single offering He has forever completely cleansed and perfected those who are consecrated and made holy.

And also the Holy Spirit adds His testimony to us [in confirmation of this]. For having said, this is the agreement (testament, covenant) that I will set up and conclude with them after those days, says the Lord: I will imprint My laws upon their hearts, and I will inscribe them on their minds (on their inmost thoughts and understanding),

He then goes on to say, And their sins and their lawbreaking I will remember no more.(Hebrews 10:12-17, emphasis mine)

But for us to benefit from God's promised forgiveness, we must receive it by faith.

Many years ago when I was first developing my relationship with the Lord, each night I would beg His forgiveness for my past sins. One evening as I knelt beside my bed, I heard the Lord say to me, "Joyce, I forgave you the first time you asked, but you have not received My gift of forgiveness because you have not forgiven yourself." Have you received God's gift of forgiveness? If you have and you are ready to do so, ask the Lord to forgive you for your sins right now. Then pray this aloud:

I receive Your forgiveness, Lord, for the sin of(name the sin).

It may be difficult to verbalize some of your mistakes an sins from the past, but speaking them forth helps bring the release you need.

One time as I was praying, I asked God to forgive me because (as I put it), "I missed it."

"Missed what?" He asked.

"Well, You know, Lord," I answered, "You know what did."

He did, indeed, know. But for my sake it was made clear to me that I needed to verbalize my sin. The Lord showed that the tongue is like a dipper reaching down into a well within us and bringing up and out whatever is down there.

Once you clearly ask for the gift of forgiveness, receive it your own and repeat out loud:

Lord, I receive forgiveness for

(name the sin),in Christ Jesus. I forgive myself and accept Your gift of forgiveness as my own. I believe that You remove the sin from me completely, putting it at a distance where it can never be found again-as far as the East is from the West. And I believe, Lord, that You remember it no more.

You will find that speaking aloud is often helpful to you because by doing so you are declaring your stand upon God's Word. The devil cannot read your mind, but he does understand your words. Declare before all the principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness (see Ephesians 6:12) that Christ has set you free and that you intend to walk in that freedom. When you speak, sound as though you mean it!

If the devil tries to bring that sin to your mind again in the form of guilt and condemnation, repeat your declaration, telling him: "I was forgiven for that sin! It has been taken care of; therefore, I take no care for it." Satan is a legalist, so if you want to, you can even quote the date on which you asked for and received God's promised forgiveness.

Do not just sit and listen to the devil's lies and accusations; learn to talk back to him!

Confess Your Faults to One Another

In James, chapter 5, the way to be healed and restored is mad every clear:

Is anyone among you afflicted (ill-treated, suffering evil)? He should pray. Is anyone glad at heart? He should sing praise [to God].

Is anyone among you sick? He should call in the church elders (the spiritual guides). And they should pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Lord's name.

And the prayer [that is] of faith will save him who is sick, and the Lord will restore him; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working], (jas.5:13-16)

We are to confess our faults to one another. But this does not mean that every time we sin, we need to confess it to another person. We know that Jesus is our High Priest. We do not have to go to people to receive forgiveness from God. That was the case under the old covenant, but not under the new covenant. What is the practical application of James 5:16? I believe we not only need to know the Word of God, but how to apply it practically to our daily lives. A person can be bleeding and know that he has a bandage, but if he does not know how to apply the bandage, he can bleed to death. Many people have the Word of God, yet they are "bleeding to death" (living in torment), because they do not know how to apply the Word in everyday situations.

I believe that James 5:16 should be applied in this manner. First, be sure you know that man cannot forgive sin-that is God's job. Yet, man can pronounce and declare God's forgiveness to you. Man can agree with you concerning your forgiveness. Someone can even pray for you to be forgiven (see 1 John 5:16), just as Jesus did when He was on the cross praying for those who had persecuted Him to be forgiven.

When do you need to apply this passage? I believe a time to consider placing James 5:16 into action is when you are being tormented by your past sins. Being poisoned inwardly keeps you from getting well-physically, mentally, spiritually, or emotionally.

Once exposed to the light, things hidden in darkness lose their power. People hide things because of fear. Satan pounds at the mind with thoughts such as: What will people say if they learn that I was abused? Everyone will think I'm

horrible! I'll be rejected, *etc.*

In my meetings, numerous people have come to me for prayer, confiding in me, "I have never told this to anyone, but I feel I need to get it out of my system; I was abused." Often they weep uncontrollably. With this weeping, however, often there comes a release that is desperately needed. Hurting people feel safe with me because they know that I was abused also. Now, please understand that I am not saying that everyone needs to admit to being abused and to ask for prayer for healing. If you are suffering from the effects of abuse, be led by the Holy Spirit, not only in deciding whether you need to confess to someone, but also in deciding to whom you should make your confession. The person must be carefully chosen. I suggest a mature Christian you know you can trust. If you are married, and your spouse fits these criteria, consider him or her first.

You should know that often when a spouse finds out about the situation, he or she will respond with anger toward the abuser. Therefore before you make your confession you should be sure that your spouse is Spirit-controlled and willing to follow God's leading and not personal feelings.

Your spouse may ask you some questions that you can easily misunderstand if you are not fully prepared for them. For example, when I told my husband about my father sexually abusing me all those years, he asked me, "Did you ever try to get him to stop?" and "Why didn't you tell anyone?" Keep in mind that your spouse may not fully understand your situation and feelings and may just need some answers. In my case, as soon as I explained to my husband that I was controlled by fear, he understood.

The practice of confessing our faults to one another and receiving prayer is a powerful tool to help break bondages. I had been having trouble with jealousy in a certain area for some time, and I certainly did not want anyone to know about it, so I refused to ask for prayer. Instead, I chose to fight it out alone, and as a result made no progress at all. As God gave me revelation on James 5:16, "Confess to one another therefore your faults," I came to realize that there were a few areas in my life that were maintaining power over me, simply because I was hiding them and was too proud to bring them out in the open. Fear can cause us to hide things, but pride can do that too. I humbled myself and confessed my problem to my husband, and he prayed for me. After that, I began to experience freedom in that area.

A Word of Caution

Sometimes people relieve themselves of a problem and, in the process, give the problem to someone else. After hearing me teach on the importance of truth, and how hiding things can cause problems, a woman who attended our meetings came to me to confess that she had always disliked me intensely, and had even been gossiping about me. Then she asked me to forgive her, which, of course, I was willing to do. She left excited that she was rid *of her problem, but I was left fighting off bad thoughts about her. I wondered what she had been saying about me, to whom she had been talking, if they had believed her, and how long this had been going on.

Balance, wisdom, and love are key words in the Bible. Operating in these qualities will accelerate your progress. A person who is filled with wisdom and love will think a matter through, seek and receive direction from the Lord, and handle the situation in a balanced way.

Every time I preach this message of deliverance from a broken heart, I get stirred up to go and be all God wants me to be. I want you to be determined that you will not just be half of what God wants you to be, or three-quarters of what He wants you to be, but all that He wants you to be.

In Ephesians 3:16, the apostle Paul prayed, "May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the[Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality](emphasis mine).

The inner man is where we need emotional healing. Our emotions are part of our soul. We are a spirit, and we have a soul.

Our soul is made up of our mind, our will, and our emotions. Our mind tells us what to think, our will tells us what we want, and our emotions tell us how we feel.

Satan works to keep your emotions wounded when other people hurt you. Proverbs 18:14 kjv says, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" The devil wants you to remain broken inside, so that you cannot handle the trouble that comes to all of us in life. But the Holy Spirit moves into your inner man and personality and dwells there to strengthen and reinforce you with mighty power. He reminds you of God's Word, saying, "Cast your burden on the Lord [releasing the weight of it] and He will sustain you; He will never allow the [consistently] righteous to be moved (made to slip, fall, or fail)" (Psalm 55:22).

If we have inner strength, then we can handle the problems of life. Without inner strength, we cannot even handle a traffic jam!

I used to be such a mess inside that it was all I could do to deal with ordinary, everyday problems.

Our emotional wounds keep us from coping with everyday problems. We need deliverance from wounded emotions just to deal with a cranky store clerk, or a child who does not want to do what we want him to do, or a spouse who is not spiritually mature.

When we have internal problems, we have external problems. But when we are made strong inside, when we are strengthened with all might and power in the inner man, by the power of the Holy Ghost, then we can deal with all those other things that come our way.

Be Transformed into His Image

Everyone has strengths and weaknesses, and you and I are no exception. God desires to deliver us from the things that keep us in bondage to pain. He will strengthen us through the power of the Holy Spirit and will mold our personalities in such a way that we have a Spirit-controlled temperament.

If we do not receive God's help, we can become messed up in many areas of our personalities. Our natural desires oppose the nature of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:17). Left to our own selfishness, we are likely to live out the practices defined in Galatians 5:19-20, which include things like strife, jealousy, and anger. Then we may get into relationships with other messed-up people and just keep distressing each other even more. But relationships are a major part of life, and we cannot avoid having to get along with other people. The Bible is all about our relationship with God (the Godhead), our relationship with ourselves, and our relationship with others. As I said previously, if we do not like ourselves, we are never going to get along with anybody else. Many of the battles that we have with other people come because we are at war with ourselves.

The Holy Spirit is available to help mold us into the image of Christ. It is written of God in Romans 8:29: "For those whom He foreknew [of whom He was aware and loved beforehand] , He also destined from the beginning [foreordaining them] to be molded into the image of His Son [and share inwardly His likeness], that He might become the firstborn among many brethren."

If we come to terms with the truth that we need deliverance from our wounded past, we can receive God's power to transform our personality to be like Christ, and improve our relationship with God, with ourselves, and with others. We can come to terms with our own conflicts, and receive healing in our attitude toward ourselves.

You may still blame yourself for abuses that you did not have anything to do with. The devil may be telling you there must be something wrong with you; otherwise, people would not have treated you the way they did. If you were sexually abused, the devil may be telling you that there must be something wrong with you, or else that other person or persons would not have used you for improper purposes. But you were not created for improper purposes, and any abuse you may have suffered was an injustice. A child who is abused has no ability to look at her abuser and say, "You have a problem, and I am not your problem. You are trying to give me a problem, but I am not receiving it."

When abuse continues against us into adulthood, we find it even more difficult to defend ourselves against the devil's deceptive lies. Satan plays a recording in our thoughts that repeats:

What is wrong with me? What is wrong with me? There must be something wrong with me or this would not be happening to me. What am I doing wrong?

What am I doing wrong that you have to talk to me like that? What am I doing that you never want to put your arms around me and love me?

What am I doing that when I go to Mom or Dad for a hug, they push me away? What did I do that my parents did not even want me so that they gave me away ? What am I doing that you want to treat me like your mistress instead of your daughter? What am I doing? What is wrong with me?

Nobody else I know is being treated this way. There must be something wrong with me.

Some people listen to this record of internal pain over and over, year after year after year, until suddenly they are adults looking for someone to love them because they were never offered the love they needed and deserved. They are so love-starved that they are incapable of loving anyone else the way God intended them to do.

I speak from personal experience when I say that if you still relate to that kind of internal pain, you will probably find it difficult to enter into a normal relationship and have normal expectations of anyone else. You may want your friend or spouse to make up to you for the years of abuse you suffered. But such unrealistic expectation of a friend or spouse puts them on overload and possibly scares them away. They may be trying to give you everything they know how to give you, but until you are delivered from the wounds of your past, nothing that anyone else does for you will ever be enough. I remember going through a time when I was never happy. I always wanted Dave to do something else, always wanted him to do something more. And he sincerely tried for years. He did everything he could to help me through my crisis of pain.

Dave is a real easygoing guy, and he tried so hard to make me happy. But one day he looked at me and said, "Woman" (the only time Dave calls me "woman" is when he is fed up, which is not too often), "now hear this. I have tried to make you happy. And you know what? I have decided that it can't be done. No matter what I do, I am not going to make you happy." Then he said, "So guess what? I am finished trying."

Allow God to Fill Your Empty Heart

Thank God, the Holy Ghost was working in me through this crisis to strengthen me. I was just beginning to read the Word, and was beginning to see that all my problems, all of my present unhappiness, was not somebody else's fault-I had a problem in me. So I started working with God to get my life turned around.

Many married people end up in divorce when they realize that their spouse is not going to make them happy. They say, "If you're not making me happy, then I am not staying in this relationship." So they look for somebody else to make them happy, but their root of rejection keeps them brokenhearted.

A root of rejection will leave you insecure, with low self-esteem, and no confidence. Until you are delivered, you will always expect someone else to make you feel good about yourself. I needed daily fixes of self-worth, just like an addict craves his drugs. I needed reassurance all the time; there was no end to my

deficiency, and sometimes, the more attention I was given, the more I craved. People who have a root of rejection in their life feel unloved and insecure. Their personality is broken; they are shattered inside. As a result, they are constantly looking for something to make them feel okay. They try everything: a better job, a promotion, a spiritual gift, a position in the church, the right friends, the right label in their clothes, the right kind of car to drive, the right kind of house to live in, the right social group to belong to, or unending compliments. They seem to always imply, "Tell me I am okay, fall all over me with compliments, let me always be right." Insecure people cannot be corrected because they already feel so bad about themselves.

I know these things about insecure people because I had every one of these problems until the Counselor, the Holy Ghost, and the Word of God brought me out of that pit of despair, from ashes to beauty.

The Holy Spirit is the only One ordained to do a work within us. He fills our heart with God Himself. I encourage you to carefully consider again Paul's prayer for us, which was "[that you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves]the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being]unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!" (Ephesians 3:19, emphasis mine).

If we become wholly filled with God Himself, we will not crave the reassurance of others. We will be so flooded with God's love that it will overflow into our relationship with Him, with ourselves, and with others.

If you will allow Him to do so, God will deliver you from the pain of your past. Receive God's healing, and allow the Holy Spirit to have His way in your heart. He will fill you with all the reassurance that you need to enjoy life. He will show you how to put the past behind you so that you will not even feel pain if you remember it. Ecclesiastes 5:20 promises the person who totally commits himself to God: "For he shall not much remember [seriously] the days of his life, because God [Himself] answers and corresponds to the joy of his heart [the tranquility of God is mirrored in him]."

Free at Last The pathway to emotional healing and freedom to enjoy your life is not necessarily easy. However, pressing forward toward freedom is definitely better than staying in bondage: so, since Christ suffered in the flesh for us, for you, arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose [patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God]. For whoever has suffered in the flesh [having the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God].

So that he can no longer spend the rest of his natural life living by [his] human appetites and desires, but [he lives] for what God wills. (1 Peter 4:1-2)

Careful study of this Scripture passage reveals that we need to arm ourselves with proper thoughts such as: I would prefer to suffer with Christ in order to do right, than to remain in bondage to sin.

Having the correct mindset is important to victory. When I first realized that Jesus could and desired to set me free, I wanted to have that freedom, but my

attitude was, "I will not suffer anymore; I have suffered enough, and I will not submit to anything that even remotely resembles emotional pain." The Holy Spirit led me to several scripture passages that helped me realize I had a wrong mindset and needed to prepare myself or arm myself with right thinking. I began to think this way: I do not want to suffer anymore, but I will do so rather than stay in bondage. As long as I am in bondage, I am suffering anyway, but it is a type of suffering that has no end. If I am willing to let Jesus lead me through whatever I must go through in order to be free, it may hurt for a while, but at least it will be a suffering that leads to victory, to a new life liberated from emotional pain.

A good example is physical fitness. If my body were terribly out of shape due to bad eating habits and a lack of exercise, I would be suffering because I would be tired and feel bad all the time. As long as I did nothing about my condition, the suffering would just continue day after day. If I decided to get in shape, I would start to exercise, choose the right foods, and avoid the wrong ones.

For a period of time, I would suffer from sore muscles. My body might throw a fit if I did not give it certain addictive foods that it was used to. That is a type of suffering. I would need to redirect some of my time to allow for exercise, and that might produce a certain type of suffering because I would need to make wise choices and not emotional choices.

We can see by this example that in order to be free from the senseless suffering that is produced by being physically unfit, a person must suffer in another way, but it is a type of suffering that leads to victory and ultimately brings an end to suffering.

Right Suffering and Wrong Suffering Meditating on the following scriptures reveals that we should choose by faith to be joyful while we are going through difficult transitions, knowing that because God loves us, even our "right suffering" will produce a good end, which is, in this case, mature character:

Moreover [let us also be full of joy now!] let us exult and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance.

And endurance (fortitude) develops maturity of character (approved faith and tried integrity). And character [of this sort] produces [the habit of] joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation.

Such hope never disappoints or deludes or shames us, for God's love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us. (Romans 5:3-5)

Because of a wrong mindset, many people never mature to the point that they

experience joy in living. Maturity always includes stability. Without stability we never really experience peace and joy.

There is a "right suffering" and a "wrong suffering." The apostle Peter encouraged believers to be sure that they did not suffer for wrongdoing, but that if they did suffer, it should be for doing the right thing. In 1 Peter 3:14 he notes, "But... in case you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, [you are] blessed."

In verse 16 he exhorts us to live in such a way that we make sure that our conscience is entirely clear, and in verse 17 he says, "For [it is] better to suffer [unjustly] for doing right, it that should be God's will, than to suffer [justly] for doing wrong."This is an important area. Many people never experience the joy of freedom because of a wrong mindset concerning suffering. At some point in your Christian life, you may have heard that Jesus wants to set you free from all your suffering, and that is true-He does. However, there is a transition involved, and transition is never easy.

During childbirth, the part of the labor process known to be the most difficult is called "transition." For thirty-three years I lived a life of pain. When I finally discovered that Jesus wanted to free me from suffering, I entered transition. I was being changed, transformed into His original idea of me before I was marred by the world. I suffered for a few more years, but in a different way. It was not a hopeless suffering but a suffering that actually produced hope, because I could see changes throughout the transition.

These were not always big changes, but the Lord always kept me from giving up. Just when I thought I could not stand the pain any longer, He would come through with a special blessing that would let me know that He was there all the time-watching over me.

The Refiner's Fire

If you understand that right suffering works like a refining fire, then the following verses will have special meaning brings great comfort:

But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire, like fullers' soap;

He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He will purify the priests, the sons of Levi, and refine them like gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord offerings in righteousness. (Malachi 3:2-3)l would like to share with you a story that I once heard which sheds light on this passage. In Europe a man went into a goldsmith's shop and found some items he wished to buy. The entire time he was inside the shop, he never saw the shopkeeper. In order to finalize his purchases, he began to look for the proprietor, and as he did, he noticed in the rear of the shop an open door that led outside. As he stood in the doorway, he saw the shopkeeper (actually the refiner) sitting over a fire upon which sat a huge pot. He would not take his eyes off the simmering pot, even though the interested customer tried to speak to him about buying some of his merchandise.

The customer asked if he could not leave what he was doing for a short while to come inside and take care of the transaction. However, the refiner said, "No." He stated that he could not leave the metal in the pot, not even for one minute, explaining it this way: "It is very important that this metal, which is gold, does not harden until all the impurities are out of it. I intend for it to be pure gold. If the fire gets too hot, it could ruin it, and if the fire gets too cool, the gold could harden with impurities still in it."

He explained that he could not leave it, nor take his eyes off it at all. He would need to sit over it until it was completely finished. The customer asked when that would be, and the refiner replied, "I will know it is finished when I can look in the metal and see my reflection very clearly."

To me, this is such a beautiful story because it lets me know that God is always guarding my life and watching over the trials that come my way to make sure they do not become too intense. But He also makes sure there is enough pressure to keep doing a work in me. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 Paul says that God will never allow more to come upon us than we can bear, but with every temptation He will also provide a way out. We can trust God not to expect us to endure beyond our ability.

Believe me, God knows what you are capable of bearing even more than you do. Trust Him, and He will bring you through the refining process so that you emerge as pure gold.

Press On toward the Goal

It will be easier to endure right suffering if you understand that the refiner's fire is a lifelong process. Realizing this truth, the apostle Paul wrote: "Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own, that for which Christ Jesus ... has laid hold of me" (Philippians 3:12).

In his writings, Paul often likens the Christian life to a race:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but [only] one receives the prize? So run [your race] that you may lay hold [of the prize] and make it yours.

Now every athlete who goes into training conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we [do it to receive a crown of eternal blessedness] that cannot wither.

Therefore I do not run uncertainly (without definite aim). I do not box like one beating the air and striking without an adversary.

But [like a boxer] I buffet my body [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and subdue it, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit], (1 Corinthians 9:2427) Trust the Lord, and He will bring you across the finish line. Be determined to press on and to take hold of that for which Christ has taken hold of you. He took hold of you to save you.

Your salvation included many benefits in this life-not just a home in heaven when you die. Your eternal salvation began the day you were born again, and it will never end. God took hold of you to restore to you what the enemy had stolen from you, but you will need to be determined to have it back.

Do not be passive and expect victory to just fall on you. It does come by the grace of God, and not by our works, but we must actively cooperate with the Holy Spirit each step of the way.

In his book, The Great Lover's Manifesto, Dave Grant points out that we never grow when things are easy. We waste away without effort. We human beings are essentially lazy and always searching for the easy way, but in reality, we need some tension in order to stretch and grow. We will not grow until we agree that struggle benefits us, and that struggle is good because it keeps us moving and alive. Paul said that he "pressed on." His phrase indicated tension and struggle; it indicated that the Christian walk is not easy.

In Grant's book, he relates the following story: "A number of bees were taken along on a flight into space in order to see how they would handle the experience of weightlessness. In the weightless atmosphere they were able to float in space without any effort. The report on the experiment was summed up in these words: 'They enjoyed the ride, but they died'"(emphasis mine). 151 agree 100 percent with Mr. Grant, who goes on to say that we seldom drift into

anything worthwhile.

Hang Tough in Hard Times! In the following verses, the Old Testament prophet Habakkuk speaks of hard times, which he calls "high places," and states that God had given him hinds' feet to remain surefooted during those times:

Though the fig tree does not blossom and there is no fruit on the vines, [though] the product of the olive fails and the fields yield no food, though the flock is cut off from the fold and there are no cattle in the stalls,

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the [victorious] God of my salvation!

The Lord God is my Strength, my personal bravery, and my invincible army; He makes my feet like hinds' feet and will make me to walk [not to stand still in terror, but to walk] and make [spiritual] progress upon my high places [of trouble, suffering, or responsibility]! (Habakkuk 3:1719)

The term hind refers to a certain kind of deer that is an agile mountain climber. It can scale up what looks like a sheer cliff with no difficulty at all, leaping from ledge to ledge with great ease. This surefootedness is God's will for us, so that when hardship comes our way we are not intimidated nor frightened at all.

To be truly victorious, we must grow to the place where we are not afraid of hard times but are actually challenged by them. In these verses, The Amplified Bible refers to these "high places" as "trouble, suffering, or responsibility." This is because it is during these times that we grow.

If you look back over your life, you will see that you never grow during easy times; you grow during hard times. During the easy times that come, you are able to enjoy what you have gained during the hard times. This is really a life principle; it is just the way it works. You work all week, then you receive your paycheck and enjoy your weekend off. You exercise, eat right, and take good care of yourself, then you enjoy a healthy body. You clean your house, or basement, or garage, and then you enjoy your neat, clean surroundings each time you walk through them. l am reminded of Hebrews 12:11: "For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems grievous and painful; but afterwards it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it."

The person who serves God from love for Him does what is right because it is right. He does not do it to inherit any good, though in the end the blessing will not fail him. Seek to be whole in order to give the Lord glory, and in the end, you will enjoy being glorious.

Build Bridges-Not Walls Walls represent protection. We all have a tendency to build our own walls in an attempt to protect ourselves against being hurt. As I have mentioned several times, although I have a .very kind and wonderful husband, there are times when he hurts me. I finally realized that whenever my husband caused me emotional pain, I erected a wall-l am speaking spiritually-behind which I could hide and keep him from hurting me again. But the Holy

Spirit showed me that when I put up walls to keep others out, I also wall myself into a solitary place of confinement.

Many people live isolated lives because they have erected self-made walls to protect themselves. However, those walls become prisons, and they are trapped in bitterness and loneliness. They erect protective walls to prevent themselves from experiencing emotional pain, but they are unable to love and be loved unless they are willing to be hurt.

Spending your lifetime trying to avoid pain is more painful than living normally and dealing with each issue as it arises.

Jesus is the Healer and will always be available to minister comfort to you in hurtful situations. I believe the Lord wants me to encourage you right now to take a step of faith and tear down your self-made walls. The thought will probably be frightening, especially if you have been living behind them for a long time. God can bring down those emotional walls that separate you from others, just as He crumbled the walls of Jericho (see Joshua 2:1-21; 6:1-27). The King James Version of Hebrews 11:30 states that "by faith" the walls came down.

I have to take a step of faith each time Jesus shows me that I have erected walls to keep others out. I must choose to put my faith in Him as my Protector, rather than attempting to protect myself.

There are several scriptures in the Bible that promise God's protection. Isaiah 60:18 is one that ministers to me: "Violence shall no more be heard in your land, nor devastation or destruction within your borders, but you shall call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise."

What this verse says to me is that salvation through Jesus Christ is a wall of protection about me. From the moment I become His, He takes upon Himself the job of protecting me. However, in order to activate the blessings in my life, I must believe that He is watching over me. As long as I continue to reject the Lord's protection, trying to take care of myself, I will continue to live in bondage and misery.

Another wonderful scripture on the subject of God's protection is Isaiah 30:18: "And therefore the Lord [earnestly] waits [expecting, looking, and longing] to be gracious to you; and therefore He lifts Himself up, that He may have mercy on you and show loving-kindness to you. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed (happy, fortunate, to be envied) are all those who [earnestly] wait for Him, who expect and look and long for Him [for His victory, His favor, His love, His peace, His joy, and His matchless, unbroken companionship]!"Careful study of this verse reveals God as One Who is literally waiting for an opportunity to be good to us, to bring justice into our situations.

However, He can do that only for those who are expecting and waiting for Him to do so. Give up the labor of "self-protection" and start allowing and expecting God to protect you.

Let God be God.

As you enter this new realm, by faith, I cannot promise that you will never be hurt, but I can promise that God is "a God of justice," which means that He will eventually bring balance and will reward you for choosing His way.

Any person who chooses God's way to handle his problems and hurtful situations is destined for great things: "Even as it is written ... we are regarded and counted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us" (Romans 8:36, 37, emphasis mine).

How can we be more than conquerors, and at the same time look like sheep being led to the slaughter? The answer is simple: While it may appear we are being taken advantage of, while it may seem that the Lord is not going to rescue us, we are more than conquerors because in "the midst of the mess," we have a knowing inside that our God will never leave us nor forsake us and that, at exactly the right moment, our deliverance and reward will come.

Building Bridges

One day while I was praying, the Holy Spirit showed me that my life had become a bridge for others to pass over and find their place in God. For many years, I erected only walls in my life, but now where there were walls there are bridges instead. All the difficult and unfair things that have happened to me have been turned into highways over which others can pass to find the same liberty that I have found. I have learned to build bridges instead of walls.

As I stated in the fifth chapter of this book, God is no respecter of persons (see Acts 10:34). What He does for one, He will do for another, as long as His precepts are followed. If you will follow the precepts that have been outlined in these pages, you will discover the same freedom that I have found. Then you can become a bridge for others to pass over, instead of a wall that shuts them out.

In Hebrews 5:9 Jesus is referred to as "the Author and Source of eternal salvation." He pioneered a pathway to God for us. He became a highway for us to pass over. It is as though He faced a giant forest and went in ahead of us so that when we came along we could drive right through it without having to fight all the elements and the density of the forest. He sacrificed Himself for us, and now that we are benefiting from His sacrifice, He is giving us a chance to sacrifice for others so they can reap the same benefits we enjoy.

Hebrews 12:2 says that Jesus endured the cross for the joy of obtaining the prize that was set before Him. I like to remind myself of that fact when the way seems hard. I tell myself, "Keep pressing on, Joyce; there is joy ahead."

Make a decision to tear down your walls and build bridges. There are many, many people who are lost in their messes and need someone to go before them and show them the way. Why not be that person for them?

Walls or bridges? The choice is yours.

Beauty for Ashes Not only does the Lord want to turn your walls into bridges, but as He promises in His Word, He also wants to give you beauty for ashes:

the spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed and qualified me to preach the Gospel of good tidings to the meek, the poor, and afflicted; He has sent me to bind up and heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the [physical and spiritual] captives and the opening of the prison and of the eyes to those who are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord [the year of His favor]... To grant [consolation and joy] to those who mourn (in Zion)... to give them an ornament (a garland or diadem) of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, the garment [expressive] of praise instead of a heavy, burdened, and failing spirit. (Isaiah 61:1, 2, 3)

These promises in Isaiah 61 are rich and plentiful. Read them and make a decision not to miss out on a single one. I will be in agreement with you as I pray that every person who reads this book will inherit the promises.

God has done His part by giving us Jesus. I have done my part by acting on the Word of God and obtaining freedom, then writing this book to help you do the same. Now, you must do your part by making a quality decision that you will never give up until you have allowed Him to:

bind up your wounds;

heal your broken heart;

liberate you in every area of your life;

open your prison door;

give you joy instead of mourning, a garment of praise instead of a heavy, burdened and failing spirit; and beauty instead of ashes.

Nothing Will Be Wasted No experience in your life is ever wasted or in vain if you give all your cares to the Lord. Even if your fragmented life looks like an abandoned battlefield, Jesus can reshape all the pieces of your past into something beautiful.

After Jesus had fed five thousand people with just a few loaves of bread and two small fish, He told His disciples, "Gather up now the fragments (the broken pieces that are left over), so that nothing may be lostandwasted" (John 6:12). The disciples gathered up twelve baskets of food from the leftovers, still much more than the small offering of loaves and fishes that was made to Jesus in the first place.

God set me free from fear, insecurity, emotional addictions, and the bondage of a deep-rooted sense of rejection. Then He reshaped my fragmented life and gave me the glorious privilege of teaching His people how they can be whole; how they can have fruitful, happy lives and ministries; and how they can enjoy healthy, loving relationships.

I have learned to receive unconditional love from God, from Dave, and even from myself. My husband does not do everything I want him to, the way I want him to, when I want him to; but that is okay now, because I have learned how to love him unconditionally too. When we were first married, I did not know anything about unconditional love. My family had to do everything my way, or else I assumed they did not love me.

When I suffered from a broken heart, everyone who was in a relationship with me had to work very hard to try to keep me happy. They suffered because they could never be real with me. They could never honestly tell me the truth about anything. They had to tell me what I wanted to hear if they wanted any peace at all.

If I said to Dave, "Let's go get a cup of coffee," he could not say, "Well, I would rather not do that," or I would pout. That was my way of controlling things. I was broken: shattered, fractured, fragmented, and dysfunctional. I had been violated, and I was making everyone pay for my pain, even if they were not the ones who had caused it.

If you have been violated through abuse, your rights as a human being were

dishonored, which can cause you to feel overwhelmed. So many victims of abuse eventually reach the point where they say, "I can't handle this." They are not really troubled by the problems in everyday life; they are overwhelmed by the problems of a broken heart. Those of us who grew up in a dysfunctional home are often so insecure that we create dysfunctional homes too.

We need inner strength to keep from being overwhelmed by outward circumstances. We must allow God to gather up our fragmented dreams and remold us into the image of Christ. To do that, He may have to crush the few pieces we have left into fine clay, water us with His Word, reshape our lumpy mass of leftovers, and put us back on His potter's wheel. But He is more than capable of designing something miraculous from whatever we have left to give Him.

Jesus told us that in the world there would be trouble, saying, "I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage; be confident, certain, undaunted]! For I have overcome the world. [I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you]" (John 16:33).Nobody can avoid tribulation in this life, but those who put their faith in Jesus can be of good cheer: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19 kjv). But the Word does not say that God delivers us immediately. We may have to go through a few things first.

Life always overcomes death, and light always overcomes darkness. Without God's Word, the future may seem dark, but Jesus said that He came to deliver us from darkness: "I have come as a Light into the world, so that whoever believes in Me [whoever cleaves to and trusts in and relies on Me] may not continue to live in darkness" (John 12:46). Instead of living in darkness and misery, we are to continue to follow Jesus and conform wholly to His example in living (see John 12:26).

You cannot continue if you are broken, overwhelmed, or subdued. But by now, you have received enough of God's Word through the testimonies in this book, to know that you are no longer bound to your past, if you follow the Lord. Jesus said, "If you abide in My word [hold fast to My teachings and live in accordance with them], you are truly My disciples. And you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

Continue to Follow the Lord

God plants dreams in people's hearts. But many people do not continue all the way to the end in order to follow Him to the fulfillment of that dream. Many get started and quit, get started and quit, get started and quit. They do not continue because their broken heart overwhelms their hope. They do not have any inner strength to carry them through to the end. Jesus will bind up your wounds and heal your bruises. His Word is medicine for your soul (see Proverbs 4:20-22). Read the Word of God every day, even if you read only one verse each day. I encourage you to read my daily devotional, Starting Your Day Right, and then as you fall asleep at night, think God-inspired thoughts, such as: lam the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. God loves me. He has a good plan for my future. Then pray faith-filled prayers such as this: Lord, l believe that You love me and that You can take up all these broken pieces of my life and make something out of them for my good. In Romans 8:28 Your Word says, "All things work together and are [fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose." I love You, Lord. I believe that You forgive me. Father, I receive Your healing for my broken heart.

Do not go to bed at night thinking what a horrible mess you are in and how you will never overcome it, or how nothing will ever get any better, or how nothing will ever be any different. Take the Word as your medicine. It is medicine for your flesh, your soul, and your spirit. Study it so that the power of the Word and the Spirit can work together in your life.

When you read a verse in the Bible that you want to appropriate for yourself, add it to your prayers. For example, Psalm 30:11-12 can become part of your bedtime praises; along with

the psalmist you can worship God by praying: You have turned my mourning into dancing for me; You have put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, to the end that my tongue and my heart and everything glorious within me may sing praise to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to You forever. God is eager to pour out His Spirit into your life. Just pray, Lord, move in my life. Do whatever You want to do. Heal the people I have hurt, and heal me too.

Your Pain Will Not Be Wasted

As a child I was never able to be carefree, never able to live without worries, never able just to wake up and play. I always felt sorry for myself because it seemed that my childhood and teenage years were just wasted. And then I was in a bad marriage for five years, and I felt that was a waste. As an adult, I felt that I had spent so many years just wasting my life. But God gathered up those wasted years and made my mess become my message.

He found value in every sad situation I lived through. You may be wondering, How could God ever make anything good out of this mess that I have created? God has ways that we know nothing about. He is using all of my wasted years to reach the thousands upon thousands of people who say to me, "I listen to you every day."

Sometimes I marvel at what they are listening to. They hear me tell about what a mess I used to be and how God made me whole again, and that message is giving them hope and faith that He will do the same for them. He is getting value out of my brokenness by using it to heal other peoples' brokenness.

Maybe you feel that you have wasted your life until now, but spending your time thinking about it does not move you to a new place. If you trust God, He can do something glorious in whatever time you have left, even if it is only a short while. God can do something so glorious in the time that you have remaining that everything you went through will have been worth it just to see God take it and do what He can do in you. It is impossible for me to be doing what I am doing today When God called me into ministry, to say I was a mess does not even accurately describe it. But I loved God, and I did not want to continue being the way I was. I just did not know how to change the way I was and be different and better. It took years for God to get me where He needed me to be, but I believe that He is doing a quicker work of righteousness in these last days.

God Will Do What Seems Impossible

Even if it takes decades, it is better to be on your way up than on your way down. Pray, Okay God, here. Take my broken life and gather up the fragments so that nothing in it will be wasted. Do not remain broken; make a decision to trust your past and your future to the Lord.

You may feel the way Martha felt when her brother Lazarus died. She said to Jesus, "Master, if You had been here, my brother would not have died" (John 11:21). Jesus could have arrived on the scene sooner, but the Bible says that He purposely waited until Lazarus was dead and laid in the grave. He waited until the situation was so impossible that if anything good came of it, everybody would know that it had to be a work of God (see John 11:1-11).

We need to understand that when God does not move in our circumstances, or when He does not move as quickly as we would like for Him to move, He may be waiting on purpose. Just when we think there is no way out of our mess, God will prove to us how strong and wonderful He is on our behalf (See 2 Chronicles 16:9). I had been trying to serve God for years. Why did He wait so long to touch me with the power of the Holy Ghost? Why didn't He do it two years before? Four years before? l think He was just waiting until it would take a miracle to prove that He was working in my life. The fact that God could use my life for ministry is a miracle in itself.

If Jesus had put His twelve chosen disciples through personality tests, the results would have indicated that they did not have the qualities needed to make a good ministry team. The analysts would have advised Jesus to continue His search for men who were more suited for the work He was going to require of them. Their reports would have read, "Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper, and Thomas is full of doubt," and one by one, each disciple would have been similarly disqualified.

It is interesting to note that before Jesus chose these twelve men (see Luke 6:12-16), He prayed all night! I wonder how long He prayed before He chose you and me to do what we are called to do. Jesus knows all about each one of us, yet He picked us anyway. Why? He wants to heal the brokenhearted. He wants

to gather up the fragments and show His power. And the weaker the people He chooses, the greater His power is visible through them.

When I first started serving God, I spent half of every week crying in self-pity. In spite of that fact, I was still anointed to teach Bible studies; I could preach then just as well as I can right now. But God kept me trapped in my living room with twenty-five people for years before He began to lead me into the worldwide ministry I have today.

I learned that God would not release me for public ministry until I had let Him do a work in my most private life. But during all that time of faithfulness to little things, I was progressing little by little, from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18 kjv).The great thing about God is that He does not just see where we are, He also sees where we are going. And He treats us with the end in mind throughout the whole trip. He loves us with an unconditional love from the beginning of our relationship. We may try to get

His love every way imaginable, but all we need to do is receive it.

Sometimes we try so hard to get into the presence of God, but the truth is that it is impossible to get away from Him. He is in constant pursuit of us.

In Psalm 139:7-10 the psalmist wrote of God:

Where could I go from Your Spirit? Or where could I flee from Your presence?

If I ascend up into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Sheol (the place of the dead), behold, You are there.

If I take the wings of the morning or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,

Even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me.

In verse 16 of this passage, the psalmist says that all the days of our lives "were written before ever they took shape, when as yet there was none of them." And in verses 17 and 18, he says that God thinks about us all the time: "How precious and weighty also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I could count them, they would be more in number than the sand."

Do not determine your self-worth by how others have treated you. Receive your worth and value from who you are in Christ. You may sometimes feel that the Lord is not near, but that is why knowing the Word is so important. The prophet Isaiah brought a complaint before the Lord, reporting that His people were saying:"The Lord has forsaken me, and my Lord has forgotten me."

[And the Lord answered] "Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet I will not forget you.

Behold, I have indelibly imprinted (tattooed a picture of) you on the palm of each of My hands" (Isaiah 49:14-16).

Parents did not originate the idea of keeping pictures of their children handy-God carries a picture of His children everywhere He goes. The next time you question your self- worth, remember that God has your picture tattooed on the palms of His hands.

Double for Your Trouble No matter what you have gone through, if you stick close to God, He will reward you. The Word says in Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please and be satisfactory to Him. For whoever would come near to God must [necessarily] believe that God exists and that He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out]."

Many people seem to believe that God is a punisher. But they obviously do not have an intimate knowledge of God. By His very nature of love (see 1 John 4:8), God is a rewarder.

God wants us to expect a reward; He wants us to believe for and look forward to His reward. His Word says that those who come to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder. We should not focus on what we have been through; we should set our thoughts on what God is going to do for us, as we remain faithful to Him. Our testimony should be filled with praise for Him as we proclaim, "I have a reward coming!"

The expectation of a reward fills us with hope. It helps us get through difficulties. The Bible says that although Jesus despised the cross, He endured it for the joy of the prize that was on the other side of it. Consequently, we are to continue "looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus, Who is the Leader and the Source of our faith [giving the first incentive for our belief] and is also its Finisher [bringing it to maturity and perfection]" (Hebrews 12:2).Nobody would want to go to work if they did not think they were going to get a paycheck. When there is a prize for endurance, there is motivation in us that gives us the stamina to keep going. We say, "It's okay; I can go through this, because I know I'm going to get something out of it."

It is important to realize that God is a loving Father and that He is going to take care of us. We are faithful to Him because of His goodness to us. He brings a reward and special blessings into our lives, not because He owes us anything but because it is His very nature to demonstrate love to those who diligently seek Him.

If you were not diligently seeking after more of God, you would have put this message aside many pages ago. But here you are, still reading, hoping to learn something about God that you did not know before. That tells me that you are in line for a reward from Him, as one who is faithfully seeking the Lord.

God Is Watching You

God is watching you, and He sees everything you do. The psalmist said of Him, "You know my down sitting and my uprising; You understand my thought afar off' (Psalm 139:2). The Bible says, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong in behalf of those whose hearts are blameless toward Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9). God is eagerly seeking opportunities to reward you for your faith in Him.

Jesus said, "Behold, I am coming soon, and I shall bring My wages and rewards with Me, to repay and render to each one just what his own actions and his own work merit" (Revelation 22:12). That means that people will receive pay for the actions they commit while on this earth. Now, that can be exciting in one way, and frightening in another way. We need to realize that God is watching us, and that no one is really getting by with anything. God neither sleeps nor slumbers (see Psalm 121:4). He knows everything that goes on behind closed doors. So we need to live as if we really believe that God is watching our every move. When we sit and have a conversation, we need to remember that God is the unseen Guest Who is listening to everything that we have to say.

Jesus warned His followers:

> take care not to do your good deeds publicly or before men, in order to be seen by them; otherwise you will have no reward [reserved for and awaiting you] with and from your Father Who is in heaven. Thus, whenever you give to the poor, do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites in the synagogues and in the streets like to do, that they may be recognized and honored and praised by men. Truly I tell you, they have their reward in full already. (Matthew 6:1-2)

If we do things to get attention from people, then the public attention we receive from others is our reward, and there will be no further reward from God. Do not trade God's reward for people's reward. Wait for what God can give you, because it is going to be much better than the reward that people can give you.

> Jesus went on to say, "But when you give to charity, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your deeds of charity may be in secret; and your Father Who sees in secret will reward you openly"(Matthew 6:3-4). In other words, do good works with pure motives, but do not boast about them. What you are able to do secretly, God will reward you for openly. Jesus even told us to pray privately, saying, "But when you pray, go into your [most] private room, and, closing the door, pray to your Father, Who is in secret; and your Father, Who sees in secret, will reward you in the open"(Matthew 6:6).

You may feel that you have a thankless job. Maybe you have worked in the church nursery for ten years, and the only feedback you ever get is from a few parents who complain about the way you take care of their kids. Or maybe you have been ushering at the church for five years, and nobody has ever said thank you for your faithfulness. Or maybe you are an intercessor, and nobody even knows that you are praying for them. But you are motivated to do what you do "as unto the Lord."

Do not become discouraged in doing good, for God sees everything you are

doing for others on His behalf. Not one good work that you do with the right motive has gone unnoticed by Him. God sees every person you help, every person you are kind to;

He knows every time you show somebody a little bit of mercy, every time you show someone forgiveness; and He will reward you for it. If you are looking forward to God's reward, you will continue to do things with the right motive.

What to Do When Trouble Comes

Sooner or later we all have some trouble in life. We all have some trials and some tribulations. Everybody goes through times of testing. And not every storm shows up in the forecast.

Some days we can wake up and think everything is going to be great. Before that day is over, we may be tested by all kinds of trouble that we were not expecting. Trouble is part of life, so we simply have to be ready for it. We need to have a planned response to trouble, because it is more difficult to get strong after trouble comes. It is better to be prepared by staying strong.

The first thing you need to do when trouble comes is pray, God, help me stay emotionally stable. Do not let your emotions overwhelm you. The next thing you need to do is trust God. The instant that fear rises up, pray.

Stay emotionally stable, trust God, and pray. Then while you are waiting for God to answer, simply keep doing good. Keep your commitments. Do not stop serving the Lord just because you have a problem. The greatest time in the world to keep your commitments to God is in the midst of difficulty and adversity. When the devil sees that trials and tribulations won't stop you, he will stop troubling you for a while.

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

So there are four things to do when trouble and trials come to you: Stay emotionally stable; trust God; pray immediately to avoid getting into fear; and keep doing good. The fifth thing to do is expect a reward.

We seldom even do one of these things when trouble comes, but that may be from not having a plan. I believe we need to stay strong by practicing these steps even when we are not in trouble.

To be prepared for the next time you find yourself in a difficult situation, practice saying, "I am going to be faithful to God, and God is going to give me double for my trouble. Satan, you thought you were going to hurt me, but I am going

to get a double blessing, because I am one who diligently seeks the Lord."God's Will for You

This is the will of God concerning you: Double blessings are in store for you, because you believe that "He is the rewarder of those who earnestly and diligently seek Him [out]" (Hebrews 11:6).

As you can see, there is a condition-and that is to believe. Where there is a privilege, there is also a responsibility. If you do your part, God will never fail to do His part.

You will have trouble, but what matters is how you respond to it. Do not get discouraged, disappointed, depressed, negative, or hopeless when trials come. Instead, just shake them off and keep on going. There is an upside to trouble. When you have trouble, you experience the comfort of God.

Jesus said, "Blessed and enviably happy [with a happiness produced by the experience of God's favor and especially conditioned by the revelation of His matchless grace] are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!" (Matthew 5:4).

If we really understand how awesome the comfort of God is, it is almost worth it to have a problem just to experience His marvelous comfort. The Bible says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of sympathy (pity and mercy) and the God [Who is the Source] of every comfort (consolation and encouragement), Who comforts (consoles and encourages) us in every trouble (calamity and affliction), so that we may also be able to comfort (console and encourage) those who are in any kind of trouble or distress, with the comfort (consolation and encouragement) with which we ourselves are comforted (consoled and encouraged) by God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).God comforts us so we can comfort others.

Enjoy God's Favor

Something else we need to confess every day of our life is, "I have favor with God, and God gives me favor with man. I walk in the favor of God." When you have God's favor, people like you and want to do things for you, and they don't even know why. There is no natural reason, but they are drawn to you and want to be good to you; they just want to be a blessing to you.

God's favor is wonderful. People who have been abused need to learn to shake off their offenses and just enjoy this free gift of grace from God. Those who humble themselves enjoy more and more favor in their lives.

Peter was someone who was easily offended but who learned to humble himself and enjoy God's favor in His life.

God's Blessings Are Bigger Than You Can Imagine

If I had not learned to cast my cares on the Lord, and let Him strengthen and settle me, I would not be enjoying the double blessings through which we now minister. When God called us to go on television, the Spirit of God visited Dave one morning as he was combing his hair. He said to Dave, "I have prepared you and Joyce all this time to go on television."

We didn't know that we were in a time of preparation during all those years

when we were faithful to travel anywhere to hold meetings for fifty to a hundred people; to sleep in

McDonald's parking lots when we didn't have the money to stay in hotels, because we were willing to preach for little to nothing; to withstand judgment and criticism, and endure rejection from our home church. It was all preparation for a greater work. We knew to stay faithful, but we never dreamed God's reward would be this big. We now enjoy preaching the Word to audiences of several thousand people at a time who are hungry to know God more intimately. Our Life In The Word telecast is aired daily over 400 television stations, with a potential audience of 2.5 billion people in nearly two-thirds of the world. Since 1988, we have released more than fifty books, thirty-six of which have been translated into forty-five languages, and have distributed over 3 million copies. I boast only of the Lord; God had a reward in mind for us, and His blessings upon us continue to expand each year.

I didn't know this is what God had in mind when He was telling me, "Just hang on, Joyce, I am going to give you double for your trouble. What the devil meant for evil against you, I am turning for good so that you will be in a position to help many people."

God has the same message for everybody We must endure times of preparation, but we can be "assured and know that [God being a partner in their labor] all things work together and axe[fitting into a plan] for good to and for those who love God and are called according to [His] design and purpose" (Romans 8:28).

So the next time you face trouble, shake it off. If you are loving God and walking in His will for your life to the best of your ability, then you can be assured that everything is going to work out for your good. We serve a good God Who takes bad things and works them out for good.

God's Great Exchange God is in the exchange business; He takes all the junk that we do not want and exchanges it for all the good that He has in store for us.

For example, when I married Dave, I did not have any money. I did not have a car but Dave had a car. When we got married, suddenly I had a car and money, because when Dave and I were married, everything he had suddenly became mine too.

It is the same way when we commit to Jesus. He is the Bridegroom, and we are His bride. We do not become heirs to His promise by simply dating Him, but by fully committing ourselves to Him as in a marriage. A lot of people want to just "date" Jesus, hoping they will still get the double blessings.

The power that is in the name of Jesus is enjoyed only by those who belong to Him. I did not get Dave's name until I married him. When you come to the

Lord and commit everything in your life to Him, complete with its pain and injustices, God promises to take everything that is wrong in it and exchange it for what is right.

Jesus said:

If you [really] love Me, you will keep (obey) My commands" (John 14:15). Those who love Him and obey Him will receive His great exchange described in Isaiah 61:7: "Instead of your [former] shame you shall have a twofold recompense; instead of dishonour and reproach [your people] shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double [what they had forfeited]; everlasting joy shall be theirs."

Shake It Off There will always be new opportunities to apply the principles of letting go of the past and pressing on for God's prize that we have discussed in this book. Someone who matters to you will inevitably do something to hurt you. When that happens, you will have to choose again to receive God's love, forgive the one who hurt you, pray for him, bless him, believe that God will turn the situation around for your good, and then wait for the prize of His reward.

To encourage your faith to press on to the higher prize of freedom from emotional pain, God has included many stories of victory in the Bible to remind you of people who learned to shake off offenses and remain faithful to the Lord. In fact, the Bible is full of stories of those who received double blessings for being faithful.

Joseph went from the pit to the palace. Daniel went from the lions' den to a place of promotion.

Ruth started out eating scraps in a field, because she was faithful to a mother-in-law who was going to be alone without her. Their husbands were dead, and Ruth could have gone back to the security of her own people. Her mother-in-law told her, "Just go back." But she said, "No, I'm staying with you, and your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God" (see Ruth 1:16). Then God gave her favor, and Ruth ended

up marrying Boaz, who just happened to be the richest man in the country. Esther started out as a frightened young maiden, who was not really happy about the position she was offered. But she was obedient to what God was leading her to do, and she went from being an orphan to a queen who saved a whole nation of people.

And then, of course, there is the story of Job.

The amazing thing about Job is that God allowed him to go through the painful experiences he suffered because God knew he would make it through them successfully. He knew Job was a man He could trust. If you have never read the entire book of Job, I encourage you to do so.

The devil thought that Job was faithful to God only because God protected

him. So God said to Satan, "Okay then, we will remove some of that protection, and you will find that he will still stay faithful to me" (see Job 1:12). So God allowed Satan to attack and destroy every good thing that Job possessed. He took everything away from him except his life, but Job still would not deny his allegiance to the Lord.

As a result of Job's faithfulness, "the Lord turned the captivity of Job and restored his fortunes, when he prayed for his friends; also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). It is important to note that the Lord turned Job's captivity and restored his fortunes when he prayed for his friends. These were the same "friends" who had severely disappointed him, who had not been there for him, and who had judged and criticized him. But the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before, because he was faithful to continue doing the right thing even though it was painful.

The Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before all the trouble started. God gave him a double blessing for all the trouble he had been through. Verses 12 and 13 of Job 42 say: "And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had 14,000 sheep, 6,000 camels, 1,000 yoke of oxen, and 1,000 female donkeys. He had also seven sons and three daughters."Now, you may not want sheep or camels, oxen or donkeys, or even more kids, but God knows what kind of double blessing to give to you for your faithfulness. But in order to keep pressing on and reap your double blessing, you will have to learn to shake off the troubles that come your way.

One of my favorite stories is about a farmer's donkey that fell into a dry well. The animal cried pitifully for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do for his poor donkey. Finally, he concluded that the well was too deep, and it really needed to be covered up anyway; besides, the donkey was old, and it would be a lot of trouble to get him out of the pit. The farmer decided that it was not worth trying to retrieve the animal, so he asked his neighbors to help him fill in the well and bury the donkey.

They all grabbed shovels and began to toss dirt into the well. The donkey immediately realized what was happening, and he began to weep horribly. Crying would be our normal response if somebody was mistreating us this badly, so this donkey was responding the same way we would at first, but then he got real quiet. A few shovel loads of dirt later, the farmer looked down the well and was astonished at what he saw. With every shovel of dirt that hit the donkey's back, the donkey would shake it off, and step on top of it.

As the neighbors and the farmer continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would continue to shake it off, and take a step up. Pretty soon the donkey shook off the last shovel full of dirt, took a step up, and walked right out

of the well.

We can learn so much from this story. When trouble comes, if we will quit moaning long enough to get still and listen, God will tell us what to do about our trouble. By the grace and the mercy of God, I was able to shake off a lot of things in my life, a lot of hurt feelings, a lot of mistreatment, a lot of abuse, a lot of unfair, unjust, unkind things. But I thank God that I finally learned, in the midst of shaking them off, to also believe for my reward.

The expectation of God's reward gives you hope that God is not going to leave you defenseless, that He is going to do something for you. The next time people you know get angry about something, just say to them, "Shake it off." When you meet someone who is depressed, say, "Shake it off." If people you know are moping around because somebody has hurt their feelings, say, "Shake it off." I give you permission to preach this message to everyone who needs to hear it.

Trouble Will Come

You may think that you will be completely protected from encounters with trouble because you are serving God, but that is not true. As a matter of fact, if God sends you out to minister to others, you are almost sure to have trouble. But, like the three Hebrew children who were cast into the fiery furnace, you can expect to come through the fires of testing without even smelling like smoke just as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did (see Daniel 3:23-27).

Jesus gave His disciples authority over the unclean spirits that would try to bring trouble to them. He also told His disciples what to do if the people they were trying to reach rejected them:

And He called to Him the Twelve [apostles] and began to send them out [as His ambassadors] two by two and gave them authority and power over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick-no bread, no wallet for a collection bag, no money in their belts (girdles, purses)-

But to go with sandals on their feet and not to put on two tunics (undergarments).

And He told them, Wherever you go into a house, stay there until you leave that place.

And if any community will not receive and accept and welcome you, and they refuse to listen to you, when you depart, shake off the dust that is on your feet, for a testimony against them. Truly l tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment day than for that town.(Mark 6:7-10)

Jesus was showing all of us that He will provide everything needed to serve Him. The disciples did not need extra clothes or money. They were given authority over the trouble that would come against them, and if anyone rejected them, they were to simply "shake it off." So they went out and preached everywhere the message of repentance and salvation.

If you are going to be used by God, or if you are going to walk with God, you will experience a certain amount of rejection. And more than likely that rejection will come from the people who matter the most to you. It may come from family members or close friends.

If God touches you, and you want to go deeper with Him than some of your church friends, even they are likely to reject you. People just do not want others to go where they are not willing to go themselves. If they want to pursue carnal interests, and you want to walk in the Spirit, they may openly hate you for your choice.

Jesus said of the people of His day who resisted and opposed Him, "They hated Me without a cause" (John 15:25). It really struck me one day how sad that

was. Jesus tried to be good to people, but instead of loving and appreciating Him for it, they hated Him. Joseph had a dream, and his brothers hated him for it (see Genesis 37:5). Stephen was full of grace and power and worked great wonders and miracles among the people, but religious leaders hated him for his intelligence and wisdom and the inspiration of the Spirit by Whom he spoke, so they had him arrested and eventually stoned (see Acts 6:8-12; 7:58).

It is amazing how easy it is to draw hatred, jealousy, and envy from others. If you try to be good, somebody will hate you for it. But if you respond to them with the same anger they display toward you, you are keeping yourself from being blessed. Do not let people pull you down to their level-shake it off and step up.

It is hard to shake off rejection. It hurts. But it hurts even more to live by feelings. Learn to shake off the dust of rejection and disappointment.

One time I was trying to help someone, and I really felt that I was doing the right thing. I am always very busy, and I never have to look for something to do, so I felt that I was really making a sacrifice of time and effort by trying to help this person. But no matter what I did, this individual felt that it was never enough, and so I was getting upset about it.

I felt that God wanted me to help this person because it was my Christian duty. But it seemed that despite all my best efforts, nothing I did was successful or even understood or appreciated. I finally got a breakthrough when I realized that my responsibility was to try to help that person, but that I was not responsible for that individual's joy.

A lot of times, we want everybody to be happy with everything we are doing. But we have to get over thinking that everybody is going to be happy with everything we do. We have to do what we believe is right, what we believe God is leading us to do, but we have to realize that everybody is responsible for his or her own joy. Jesus told His disciples to go preach. They did what they were supposed to do. But He told them that if people did not receive them or their message, they were not to let the indifference of others become a stumbling block to their own call.

Do not give up your ministry, or sit and cry pitifully for hours, just because everybody does not receive you, or appreciate you. Shake it off and press on to the next town, to the next person who needs to hear your testimony of what God has done in your life.

If rejection stops you cold in your tracks, then the spirit of rejection wins. You cannot stop doing what is right just because somebody does not like what you are doing.

As a matter of fact, I would venture to say that almost every time God is ready to promote you and bring you to the next level, you will experience an attack of rejection at the place where you are now. Satan will use rejection to try to keep you where you are or even to bring you down from there.

That is why so many people are rejected by their own family members when they get filled with the Holy Spirit. They go home all excited to tell everyone that they are living their lives for the Lord, only to discover that they are suddenly the "strange one" in the family. Satan uses the people who matter most to them to reject them and try to cause them to turn back to their old ways.

Step Up a Level

Like the donkey in the well, you need to shake off each shovel full of abuse and rejection and use it to keep stepping up a level until you are free to enjoy the life God has planned for you. You have already come into a new level with God. Your faith is already stronger today than it was yesterday. You are more prepared for the next time abuse is flung at you. From this day forward, you will walk into a more powerful level with God because you have determined to be faithful to Him, no matter what. You are more dangerous to the enemy when you receive the power of the indwelling Holy Ghost.

Because you believe on Jesus and receive His Holy Spirit, you can pray and receive God's best in your life. You are free to press on toward the reward of God, and your testimony will do great damage to the devil's work. As a result, he is going to influence as many people as possible to become angry about it and to criticize and oppose you.

But remember the donkey: humble yourself and shake it off. Use what the enemy plans against you to move one step closer to the place God wants you to be.

For example, Dave and I were asked to leave our home church when God started moving in our life, but then God led us to another church where the pastor accepted us, and covered us with prayer and blessing.

The Bible says that we are not at war against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and wickedness in high places (see Ephesians 6:12). Satan will continue to try to use people to keep us from going forward. If possible, he will use people whom we know and love so that the wounds from their rejection and disapproval will be deep and painful.

Sometimes we fear the disapproval of people so much that we will not step up to the next level with God because we already know that somebody is not going to like it. It is amazing how many times we bow down to people when we should be bowing down to God.

Jesus said, "He who hears and heeds you [disciples] hears and heeds Me; and he who slights and rejects you slights and rejects Me; and he who slights and rejects Me slights and rejects Him who sent Me" (Luke 10:16). He was telling us not to take rejection personally. If people are rejecting us when we are following the Lord, then they are rejecting Jesus and the Father. Now, understand that before you even gave your heart to the Lord, the devil recognized God's plan for you and did everything he could to keep you from receiving it. It is possible that the bigger the call on your life, the greater the abuse that comes against you. If you consider warfare in the spiritual world in the light of God's Word, you will understand that Satan sent all the trouble that has come upon you because he

knew that God was pursuing you to bless you.

But Jehovah is the Lord of hosts-the Lord of the armies. He is fighting for you, and that makes you more than a conqueror. The battle over you has already been won, and you are promised a double blessing for your former trouble.

Stay Full of the Joy of the Lord

The apostle Paul said, "Now am I trying to win the favor of men, or of God? Do I seek to please men? If I were still seeking popularity with men, I should not be a bond servant of Christ (the Messiah)" (Galatians 1:10).

We can see from this next passage of Scripture that Paul learned to shake off rejection and continue in joy:

And so the Word of the Lord [concerning eternal salvation through Christ] scattered and spread throughout the whole region.

But the Jews stirred up the devout women of high rank and the outstanding men of the town, and instigated persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their boundaries. But [the apostles] shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium.

And the disciples were continually filled [throughout their souls] with joy and the Holy Spirit. (Acts 13:49-52)

Stay continually filled with joy and the Holy Spirit throughout your soul; keep your mind, will, and emotions fixed on the joy that is available through the indwelling presence of the Lord. You will lose your joy if you get concerned about what everybody thinks about you. Shake off your self-consciousness and "be filled and stimulated with the [Holy] Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18).

Remain full of joy no matter what trouble comes against you. Do your best to do what you believe God wants you to do in every situation.

If people do not have enough love to show you a little mercy just because you do not do everything the way they want you to, then that is between them and God. Do not live your life to be popular; live it to do God's will.

To obey God, Joseph had to shake off many hurts and disappointments such as the betrayal of his brothers, the lies of Potipher's wife, and the forgotten promise of the butler he had helped. But the result of pressing on was that Joseph was put in charge everywhere he went. God gave him a double recompense for his troubles, and he was greatly blessed (see Genesis 37-Exodus 1).

Likewise, people did not like Daniel because he was a godly man who kept shaking off rejection. He was so disliked that he was thrown into a den of hungry lions, but God shut the mouths of the lions. When the king saw what God had done for Daniel, he proclaimed: "I make a decree that in all my royal dominion men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel, for He is the living God, enduring and steadfast forever, and His kingdom shall not be destroyed and His

dominion shall be even to the end [of the world]" (Daniel

6:26).Daniel's steadfast walk with God inspired an entire nation to believe that God "is a Savior and Deliverer, and He works signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth-He Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions" (Daniel 6:27).

In Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, beginning in 2 Thessalonians 1:3, he gave thanks because believers were growing in faith, their love for each other was increasing, and they were steadfast in the midst of persecutions and crushing distresses.

In verse 6, Paul reassured believers that God would repay with distress and affliction those who distressed and afflicted them. Then he wrote of God's determination to reward them:

And to [recompense] you who are so distressed and afflicted [by granting you] relief and rest along with us [your fellow sufferers] when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in a flame of fire,

To deal out retribution (chastisement and vengeance) upon those who do not know or perceive or become acquainted with God, and [upon those] who ignore and refuse to obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"(2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

So if you are persecuted for doing what is right in the eyes of God, rejoice. The apostle Peter said, "[After all] what kind of glory [is there in it] if, when you do wrong and are punished for it, you take it patiently? But if you bear patiently with suffering [which results] when you do right and that is undeserved, it is acceptable and pleasing to God" (1 Peter 2:20).

When you suffer for doing right, Jesus calls you blessed, saying: "Blessed and happy and enviably fortunate and spiritually prosperous (in the state in which the born-again child of God enjoys and finds satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of his outward conditions) are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (for being and doing right), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" (Matthew 5:10)Peter had to shake off failure, Paul had to shake off rejection, and you are going to have to shake off both failure and rejection if you want to be used by God. But a double reward is in store for you.

Shake off unforgiveness, resentment, trouble, and self-pity. Shake off rejection, offense, betrayal, gossip, judgment, and the kiss of Judas. Shake off arguments with relatives, close friends, and strangers. Shake off your own failures and mistakes. Shake off disappointment over your own imperfection.

Just get over it, and go on.

The season for mourning is over. It is time to rejoice.

Miraculous Reward As I was proofreading the manuscript for the first release of this book, God moved in a mighty way and brought deliverance and healing to the relationship between my father and me. I do not believe it was accidental that a miraculous conclusion of my story came in time for me to incorporate it into this book.

Although I had forgiven my father, our relationship had remained strained and uncomfortable. He had never fully accepted responsibility for his acts or faced how devastating his behavior was to my life. Through the years, I tried the best I knew how to have some kind of relationship with my parents, but it was a continual challenge.

I tried on two occasions to confront these issues with my father and mother, but neither of these efforts was successful. Each confrontation brought a lot of anger, upset, and blame, without any real conclusion. At least the door had been opened, and God was working in secret, behind the scenes, even when it seemed that nothing would ever change.

After had moved my parents to live near me, God began dealing with me about the biblical command to "honor your father and mother" (see Exodus 20:12). I must be truthful and say that although I was willing to honor them and desired to do so, I was baffled as to how to go about it. I visited them, called them, prayed for them, and took them presents, but still the Lord would say to me, "Honor your father and mother." I knew He was trying to show me something, but I could not grasp what it was. Finally, one evening as I heard again, "Honor your father and mother," I told the Lord that I had done everything for them I knew to do, and that I did not know what else it was He wanted.

Then I heard Him say, "Honor them in your heart," to which I replied, "For what can I honor them?" He showed me that I could honor them and appreciate them, in my heart, for giving me my life, for feeding and clothing me, and for sending me to school.

I had been doing things for them outwardly, but God looks on the heart. I found it difficult to have fond feelings of appreciation when all I remembered was pain, but after hearing the same thing for a year from the Lord, I knew that it was important, so I did what He said.

I prayed, "Thank You, God, for my parents and the fact that they gave me my physical life. They brought me into the world; they fed me, clothed me, and sent me to school, and I honor them for doing so." I really saw what God was saying, and that moment truly did appreciate the part my parents had played in my life.

About a week later, an issue arose concerning our newly released national television program, Life In The Word. I received news that my family members had seen the program and were urging my parents to watch it. My father and mother asked me what channel they could see the program on, and I realized that I needed to tell them I would be making reference to the abuse in my childhood because God had called me to help people who have been abused and mistreated. I could not imagine what it would do to them if they tuned in their television set and heard me saying, "I come from a background of child abuse." I did not want to hurt them. I felt awful, but what could I do? Knowing that people find it easy to relate to me because I share my background so openly, I went into much prayer, and then called for a family conference with my husband, Dave, and our children. We decided that even though letting my parents know that what I was doing could finish off what little relationship we had left, I had to follow God's will for my life.

We went to visit them, and I shared the truth, telling them that I was not doing it to hurt them, but that I had no choice if I was to help the people God had

called me to help.

I saw the miracle-working power of God!

My father and mother sat there and listened calmly. No anger was displayed; there were no accusations, no running from the truth.

My father then shared with Dave and me how sorry he was for what he had done to me. He said that God knew he was sorry and that if there was any way he could take it back, he would. He told me how he had been controlled and could not have prevented himself from what he was doing. He said that he had encountered abuse as a child himself, and was acting out of what he had learned and had become accustomed to.

He further shared that recently he had watched several television programs on abuse and had begun to realize from them how devastating sexual abuse really is. He released me to share whatever I needed to and told me not to worry about anything. He said that he wanted to build a relationship with me and try to be my father and my friend. My mother, of course, was ecstatic with joy at the thought of being able to have real relationships with her daughter, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. From that day forth, we started to see some changes in my father. He would go to church for special services on Easter or Christmas, but he never really said too much about it. He still had not given his heart to Jesus, and he was still difficult to get along with. Eventually, my mother told me that she felt that God might be dealing with my father. She said, "I have found him several times, sitting on the edge of his bed crying."

Then, one Thanksgiving morning my mother called and said, "Your dad is too sick to go to the family dinner today. He wishes he could come, but he just feels too bad, but he wants to know if you and Dave will come over and see him. He wants to talk to you about something."

So we went over, and the minute we walked into the room he started crying. He said, "I just need to tell you how sorry I am for what l did to you. I have wanted to say something about it for three years, but I just did not have the guts."

Those were his exact words. It is interesting to look back and see that it had been three years since we bought my parents the house and moved them to live near us. So our initial act of obedience to the Lord's direction was a seed that had been planted to break the devil's back in my father's situation. Then he wept with true repentance. I said, "It's all right, Daddy, I forgive you."

He asked Dave to forgive him too, and Dave said, "I forgive you."

Then I said to my father, "Do you want to receive Christ as your Savior?"

And he said, "Yes."

Because he had truly repented, it was totally different this time when he

prayed. He received the Lord, and though he struggled with doubt for several days, thinking that he had been too bad to be forgiven, he finally asked to be baptized.

We baptized my dad ten days later. I can tell you honestly that I have never seen such a change in a person's character. He is still sick, and he feels bad all the time, but he never really complains. He is actually one of the sweetest men I know. Did my dad pay the price for what he did? Absolutely! He is old and does not have a lot of friends. He cannot really get around. But I truly believe that showing him love, consistent love, and obeying God by honoring him in my heart, is what finally tore down that wall around him and caused him to repent.

My husband, Dave, told my dad that the day of his repentance was one of the greatest days in his life. As for me, I now fully understand God's promise, spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "Instead of your [former] shame you shall have a twofold recompense; instead of dishonour and reproach [your people] shall rejoice in their portion. Therefore in their land they shall possess double [what they had forfeited]; everlasting joy shall be theirs" (Isaiah 61:7). We have received a double blessing! God has restored both the abused and the abuser!

God is faithful! Dream big dreams, and never stop hoping!

Notes

l. James Strong, "Greek Dictionary of the New Testament, “Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible(Nashville: Abingdon, 1890), p. 39, entry #2588, s.v. "heart(ed)," Luke 4:18.

2. Strong, p. 69, entry #4937, s.v. "broken," Luke 4:18.

3. Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition,s.v. "abuse."

4. To hear my complete testimony, write and ask for my tape album titled "Trophies of God's Grace."

5.I also have available a series of tapes called "Loving God, Loving Yourself, and Loving Others" that you can order from our ministry address.

6. To learn more about deliverance from guilt and condemnation, write me and ask for my four-tape series on this subject,Guilt and Condemnation.

7.Strong,"Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary," p. 19, entry #954, s.v. "ashamed," Genesis 2:25.

8. Webster's NewWorld Dictionary, 3rdcollege ed., s.v. "confound."

9. Ibid., s.v. "damn."

10. If you would like more teaching on God's grace, write and ask for my six-tape album titled "Grace, Grace, and More Grace."

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11. Merriam-Webster'sCollegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition,s.v. "covet."12. Ibid., s.v. "envy."

13. Ibid., s.v. "jealousy."

14. Ibid., s.v. "drink."

15. (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1986), p. 13.

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About the AuthorJoyce Meyer has been teaching the Word of God since 1976 and in full-time ministry since 1980. She is the bestselling author of more than 50 inspirational books, including Howto Hear from God, The Joy of Believing Prayer,andBattlefield of theMind, as well as thousands of audiocassettes and a complete video library. Joyce'sLife In The Wordradio and television programs are broadcast around the world, and she travels extensively conducting "Life In The Word" conferences. Joyce and her husband, Dave, are the parents of four grown children and make their home in St. Louis, Missouri.