

JOHN HENDEE

IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIP



GOING DEEPER INTO THE LIGHT

By Gene Rogers

**LIVING IN THE LIGHT WHILE
PASSING THROUGH THIS DARKENESS
SERIES: BOOK 2**

LIVING IN THE LIGHT:

Some First Steps

Walking in the Light

SOME KEY ELEMENTS OF UNDERSTANDING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

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LIVING IN THE LIGHT WHILE PASSING THROUGH THIS DARKNESS

THIS SERIES OF BOOKS IS TO HELP US WHO HAVE CHOSEN THE LIGHT (JESUS) AND HAVE CHOSEN TO WALK IN THE LIGHT (JESUS). IT MIGHT BE A JOURNEY OF DECADES OR DAYS DEPENDING ON HOW MUCH LONGER WE LIVE AFTER BECOMING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS. IT CAN BE A JOURNEY MIXED WITH GREAT JOYS AS WELL AS GREAT SUFFERING. BUT if we are In the Light, we know that this present Darkness is passing. We won't be here forever, thanks to God. We are not alone. We will be with Jesus, the Eternal Life soon. Stay in the light.

CELEBRATING IN THE LIGHT VS. SUFFERING IN THE DARKNESS

We are talking about either living in Light or Darkness. We aren't talking shades of gray here.

It is one extreme or the other. Which it is for each person will depend on the choice each makes.

It is our call, our decision, our choice.

The world is described as the 'dominion of darkness' in the Bible.

This dark world has its' god's.

This 'blinding of the minds' results in spiritual blindness and darkness. That leads to turning off our brain to the truth. We become hardened, closed and cold to God. We cut off the messages coming from God.

Our receptors only respond to promptings and messages from the 'god of this world'. We become his slaves, living (and dying) to carry out his will. The 'god of this age' doesn't want to lose anyone he is holding captive. He will fight to keep you. He doesn't want to go down alone!!! And he will lie, cheat, deceive and harm people in order to get them to follow him.

Light or darkness? It is our choice.

What draws us to the darkness to start with? It is pretty simple.

For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. [1 John 2:16](#)

It is our love for or lust for what is attractive and desirable, but at the same time destructive. While we lust for these illicit, damaging things, they lead us down the path into darkness.

Esau had this problem. Genesis 25:29-34 He had to have something. He couldn't wait. He wanted it and he wanted it 'now'. And he sold his birthright to get it. You could say he sold his soul for something he 'had to have' that satisfied his short term wishes but that would destroy him in the long run. He couldn't wait. "Hey, it's just a bowl of soup." But it was a 'bowl' with deep implications, with a deep and dark bottom. It was 'dark soup'. "Just once" I'm sure he thought. "What can it hurt?" But he crossed a line in his head and heart that changed everything for his future. **He had to have it.** He couldn't live without it. It would be more accurate to say he did didn't want to live without it. It says he despised his 'birthright'. He took what he had been promised as the oldest son for granted. He didn't appreciate or value it and what it meant. He valued something in the moment and was willing to trade what he was promised for the long haul in order to have something NOW. His choice took him into the realm of darkness where there was weeping, pleading and gnashing of teeth afterwards. It seemed so innocent, so unimportant at the time. How wrong he was.

Isaiah gives an interesting description of those living in darkness.

Isaiah 5:20

***Woe to those who call evil good
and good evil,
who put darkness for light
and light for darkness,
who put bitter for sweet
and sweet for bitter.***

We too can cross into the realm of darkness when we try and take what is bad, damaging, destructive, evil and bitter and say it is good, sweet, right and o.k.

But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! Matthew 6:23

What Jesus is saying here is that if we live trying to justify what is really evil, then we have passed into darkness, the zone where it is REALLY DARK. We are in the deepest of pits.

To live in darkness or light

is a personal, individual choice

that every living person must make.

Most think they can venture into the darkness, frolic in its' delights and get out of there without being hurt. It is sort of like "What you do in Vegas stays in Vegas." The problem with that saying is that it is a lie. Proverbs speaks of that. There is a way that seems right to man, but ends in darkness and death. Sorry, but you take it home with you.

Now the interesting truth is that **we all start in the darkness**. We are all in the same boat and its name is Darkness is engraved on a plaque on the front of the boat's main cabin.

More than a 'boat' it is a death cruise. It is a cursed ship. We are doomed if we stay on board.

But help has come. A rescuer has come. There is a 'life boat'.

The LIGHT has come.

*the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned." Matthew 4:16*

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

God has a plan as to how to help free us and rescue all of us who are slaves and prisoners in the darkness. He sent LIGHT to shine in our hearts. That LIGHT is the only thing that can guide us or lead us out of the darkness. It can save us and change our hard heart. When we see Jesus and what he has done to rescue us, how great his love is, what a huge price He had to pay to free us, our hearts will soften and we can be released from the darkness and enjoy living in the true light.

We can get off this condemned, cursed ship. But it is our choice. Some prefer staying on the death cruise. What a terrible choice. It might look like it right now, but it IS NOT a party cruise. It's end will be more horrible than that of the famous Titanic.

The light came, the life boat came, but people loved the boat named 'darkness'.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. John 3:19

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." John 8:12

All have a decision to make. Do we want to live in the Light or the Darkness?

In making that decision we need to know that the darkness IS passing.

Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. 1 John 2:8

Being surrounded by darkness is temporary for those who choose the Light.

It is permanent for those who chose the Darkness, as in never ending. Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30 describes the destiny of those who choose the darkness in this life. Eternity, or hell will be an extension of what they choose in this life; darkness. It says they will be in OUTER darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, as they realize what a bad choice they made. Do you know what it feels like to know 'you blew it', you missed it, you passed up the best for a poor choice? This is that feeling on steroids, for eternity. This is serious stuff.

Paul says we Christians were once darkness.

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

Jesus came *to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.*' Acts 26:18

Jesus came ⁷⁹ ***to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.*" Luke 1:79**

The Light is shining so those living in darkness can escape.

He will guide us out of the realm of darkness into a new life for eternity.

³⁵ ***Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know***

where they are going. ³⁶ Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” John 12:35,36

⁴⁶ I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. John 12:46

It is our choice to be children of Light or children of Darkness. We don't have to stay in the darkness.

When we choose the Light, we are forgiven, justified, exonerated, freed, cleansed, filled and liberated. We are made right with God. It is a free gift with free passage out of darkness into the Light.

Living in the Light is so incredibly rewarding, fulfilling and enriching. It is what we were created for. We were created to live IN RELATIONSHIP with our heavenly Father, in the Light. We weren't created to live in darkness.

It's our choice. But it is a choice with consequences.

Now even though the 'darkness is passing', those of us who have chosen to live in the LIGHT have to spend our years of life here on earth "surrounded by darkness" and those choosing to live in it. And it is not an easy journey.

It wasn't for Jesus. It won't be for us. Once we choose the LIGHT we will still face challenges in life and very likely will experience sufferings, persecutions, unexplainable situations and events. We will suffer losses, hurts, etc. But be strong. We aren't alone. The darkness is passing. It will end.

We have been called from the darkness.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. ¹ Peter 2:9

We heard the CALL, and bailed out of or off of the ship of death. We are in Jesus.

We need to understand that we will live with a new TENSION the rest of our life here on earth. Don't be confused by that. It is normal. It is a result of the choice we made and will need to continue making or renewing every day.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, Galatians 5:16,17

It is the tension caused by HAVING TO CHOSE between living in light or darkness every hour of every day for the rest of our life. While we changed ships, we will need to continue to decide and choose to be faithful to Jesus every day. The Darkness (the dark side) will still be calling us to return. Satan wants us back. He will pull out the big guns. He is ticked off with our decision. He will work to win us back till our dying day.

We have to continue to chose between Jesus and the light, or the way of darkness or Satan. The god of this world is prowling around, seeking for someone to deceive. The new tension is not a bad thing. It can strengthen us and build us up.

I ran across the picture below some years ago. I don't know where it came from.

Jesus and Satan are arm wrestling.

What do you think they are arm wrestling over?

For me, as I interpret it, they are wrestling over you, over me.

We know Jesus will win in the end of time and Satan will be defeated. Satan can't and won't win.

But who will win in our life now? What determines who will win, who will be the most powerful of the two in our life?

It is the one we choose to believe and surrender to.

We give the power in and over our life to the one we choose to obey and trust.

Choose to live in darkness and Satan wins; you lose.

Choose to live in the Light and Jesus wins; you win.

It is up to us.



And Satan doesn't give up easy. And certainly Jesus doesn't. They both want us with them for eternity. Satan doesn't want to suffer alone. Jesus doesn't want to celebrate alone.

The daily choice we have to make is between believing in the false promises Satan offers us or the WAY Jesus offers. This choice puts us in a battle. Both Satan and Jesus are persuasive. But all of Satan's promises are poison filled candies. They end in death.

Jesus' promises give life.

In the New Testament this conflict is described as being between the Old man and the New man; the flesh and the spirit; the light and darkness. Take your pick. It is the same thing.

We need to stay in the light, close to Jesus. What draws us to and keeps us in Jesus? His love. *We love because He loved us first. 1 John 4:19*

And He proved His love for us. John 3:16

Yet we are vulnerable. Just as married people are vulnerable to infidelity, so are we with our relationship with Jesus. Paul warns us to be alert; to be sincere and pure in our allegiance to Jesus.

But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:3

It is a war.

Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 1 Peter 2:11

We are told to arm ourselves.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, ¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
Ephesians 6:10-16

But in this battle we can be victorious in Jesus.

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. Romans 8:37

I remember the great basketball coach Mike Schechevsky saying of basketball, "This is a mind game." The same is to be said of living in the world, choosing between darkness and Light. It is a mind game; better referred to as a war.

*Above all else, **guard your heart**, for everything you do flows from it. **Proverbs 4:23** What we give our heart to is what will control us and our thinking and decisions.*

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.
Romans 12:1,2

We need to think differently. We need to see things from God's perspectives and truth, not Satan's.

We were darkness but now are light in the Lord.

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

We are to shine in a wayward and crooked generation.

so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky. Philippians 2:15

We are to help those still trapped in the darkness just as someone helped us. We are to try and rescue those trapped in the villages of deceit. We are to risk ourselves, to go and ‘pillage’ those villages of the captives living there.

***Rescue those being led away to death;
hold back those staggering toward slaughter.***

***¹² If you say, “But we knew nothing about this,”
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?***

Proverbs 24:11,12

We are light; let our light shine.

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Matthew 5:14

The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Romans 13:12

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

I Peter 2:10-12

Have nothing to do with deeds of darkness.

Live to Honor and please Jesus.

Venture out to rescue those in the darkness.

Be faithful till death.

CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST

By Gene Rogers

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I did my internship in college with Gene Rogers. He had a huge impact on my life. The following is an article that he wrote. He hit it on the head, he nailed it. He went to be with the Lord years ago, but his widow, Alice gave me permission to include this writing of his in this book. Three of the books in this 5 book series were written by Gene.

Christianity centers in a Person! A living person whom the grave could not hold and who at this moment is very much alive and waiting to meet men in a personal encounter. The Christian faith does not center in an idea, or a system, an event, a building, a geographical Mecca, not a catechism or a book—not even the Bible—but in a Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. This cannot be said of any of the present day world religions or philosophies.

The great world religions of our day derive from real historical human founds, but they do not center in their founders. Their founders are no longer personally necessary to the religious systems. They have gone on apart from them. They are like a spider and her web. The web will remain after the spider is long gone. Confucianism does not center in Confucius but in his set of moral maxims. Buddhism in reality does not center in Buddha but in a complex set of philosophical concepts. Hinduism centers in myth and mysticism, while Mohammedanism centers in the Koran.

But with Christianity there is a striking difference. **Christianity centers in Jesus.** Christianity centers in the person of its founder and cannot possibly exist apart from Him. The focus of the Christian faith is not on what Jesus taught, not what Jesus did, although His teaching, life and sacrifice are central—the vital center is Jesus Christ himself. That virgin born, God man, sinless example, some day returning royal bridegroom of the church; **Jesus Christ is the center and essence of Christianity.** Jesus is the sum and substance, the very life of Christianity. Take Him away and you destroy it.

The Testimony of the New Testament Scripture

In John 1:11, 12 we read, “He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God.” This passage plainly states that one is born of God when he receives Christ, a person and not some doctrine or philosophy.

In I Corinthians 2:2, the Apostle Paul seems to set forth a conclusion concerning his ministry as he says, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." The person of Jesus Christ was the sum and substance of Paul's message. The second time he wrote to Corinth he reiterated this when he said, "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. " II Corinthians 4:5

In what well may have been Paul's final word of personal testimony, he said in II Timothy 1:12, "I know whom I have believed and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me." Note the personal pronouns in this testimony. Paul does not say I know 'what' I have believed, but I know 'whom' I have believed. His faith was in the living Son of God.

In I John 5:11,12 we read from John, "And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life." John's testimony was that eternal life is a person and that person is Jesus the Son of God. He does not say that he who has the right doctrine or the right affiliation or the right information has life, but 'he who has the Son has life.'

The testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ himself was, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by me." Truth and life and the right way are not to be found in abstract philosophical concepts but in the person of the living Son of God.

When Philip met up with the Ethiopian Eunuch and proceeded from Isaiah 53 to give him the message of life, the scripture says in Acts chapter 8, verse 35, and "He told him the good news of Jesus." Good news centers in a person, and that person is Jesus the Son of God.

Substitutions for Jesus

The reason Christianity is dead in so many places today is because there is no Jesus in it. Substitutions have been made for Him. And as they have, lifeless religion has resulted. A Christianity without Jesus at the center suffers the loss of power and vitality and is doomed to becoming as dead as a body from which the spirit has departed. If spiritual life and power are lacking in the life of any individual or congregation of individuals professing Christianity, chances are it is due to the absence of Jesus and the substitution of something or someone in his place.

On the things people have embraced instead of a living Savior. Some have 'joined the church' in much the same way that one would a fraternal lodge or service club and think of church membership as belonging to a moral, service organization rather than union with a living organism. Some have acquired for themselves a new moral religion centering in a combination of the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and the Sermon on the Mount with Jesus as another Moses. Some have subscribed to a plan of recreating first century Christianity. Some

have adopted man made creeds written and oral. Some have learned a catechism. Some have become defenders of orthodoxy. Some have embraced all or part of the New Testament scripture and have codified it into a moral, ethical religion. So may have believed in something or done something in lieu of receiving Jesus as the Way.

Jesus is the Way.

But Christianity is Christ!

Jesus is the Way, the unqualified Way.

He is the Alpha and the Omega, the A and the Z of the Christian faith.

He is the beginning and the end of all there is in between.

He is 'our wisdom, our righteousness, and consecration and redemption. (I Corinthians 1:30).

He is our peace, our cleaning, our healing, our power, our joy, our love our life, our everything!

He is the one who puts reality and contentment in our life.

It is He who becomes the key unlocking the meaning of life.

It is He who brings dynamic, thrill, excitement, and adventure into life.

It is only as you have received Him as the Way that worship becomes the song of the soul, the Bible becomes the unveiled word of Life and prayer becomes the communion of kindred spirits.

It is only as you have received Him as the Way that you are going anywhere for without Him you are going nowhere.

In reality, if you don't have Jesus you don't have much of anything.

But if you have Him, all things are yours.

If you have Him you have all there is of God, "For in Him dwells the whole fullness of deity" (Colossians 2:9)

If you have him every spiritual blessing is yours, for God has 'blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 1:3.

If you have Him you have fullness of life, for "you have come to fullness of life in Him" Colossians 2:10.

If you have Him you have one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3)

If you have Him you have exchanged shadow for the real thing. (Colossians 2:17)

How amazingly simple the Christian life becomes when related to the personal living Christ! It is not a matter of how well one knows a doctrine or how well one has been taught but it is a matter of one’s relationship to Jesus. Are you hot toward Him or are you cold? Are you living in close fellowship with Him or is your heart far from Him? Do you see how the whole matter of being a disciple of Jesus is simply a matter of one’s relationship with Jesus?

All aspects of the Christian life point to Jesus and have value only in their relationship to Him.

The only value of faith is that it leads us to Him.

The only value of repentance is that it calls us to turn around and face Him again.

The only value of humility is that it brings us down low enough to fellowship with Jesus.

The only value of confessing our sin is that it clears the conscience of the clouds that have separated us from the Son of righteousness.

The purpose of the spirit filled life is to make the presence of Christ real to us. The whole purpose of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus to be the way in human hearts and to glorify him. Jesus summed up the ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 16:14 when He said, “He shall glorify me.” The purpose of the whole of Scripture is to bear witness to Jesus as can easily be seen in a statement from His own lips when He says, “You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me.” John 5:39

Jesus is the way in our homes. There is great value in family devotions and discipline based upon Christian precepts as a means of directing our children to Jesus, but it young people are ever going to really see Jesus it will be when they witness His living in the lives of their parents and radiating out from them so as to capture their faith and loyalty.

Jesus is the way in our church life. The whole purpose of our assembling as Christians is to reaffirm our loyalty to Him and to praise and honor and glorify His Name. The Lord’s Supper is meant to focus our attention upon Him, upon what He did for us at the cross and upon His coming again. In a word, our assembling as Christians is for the purpose of feeding upon Him who is the Living Bread.

Jesus is the way in all our service. Fruit is not to be born in our Christian life by the energy of sheer will power and determination, but by the energizing power of the indwelling Jesus. He has ordained that we bring forth much fruit and that it remain, but he adds that 'apart from me you can do nothing.' John 15:4 Witnessing, missionary work, giving, teaching and all other spiritual activities and works which grow naturally out of the energy of the indwelling Jesus will abide forever but are meaningless without him.

Salvation and Life in Christ.

Both salvation and life are in Jesus. "And this is the testimony that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who doesn't have the Son of God doesn't have life." Christ in you is the hope of glory.' Col 1:27. It is all about Jesus.

Is your life centering in the person of Jesus?

Is your faith in a church or in Him Who is the Head of the church?

Are you following a philosophy of life or Him Who is Life?

Are you focusing your life and attention upon Biblical teaching or upon Him Who is the Subject of the Bible?

Are you more focused on a preacher, priest or some other man or woman leader, rather than on He who is our King, leader, Savior and Pastor?

Remember, "to all who received Him, who believed in His name, God gave the authority, power, privilege, right to become the children of God."

JESUS, A MAN OF CHARACTER

I understand when people have misunderstandings or incorrect assumptions about Jesus. I fit into that category years ago.

Those misunderstandings or poor assumptions are often based on gossip, inaccurate information, half truths, lies, snide comments, or ill made comments by parents, friends, celebrities or professors.

So I want to encourage everyone to think about this man Jesus we are told about in the writings of the NT of the Bible to get a more accurate picture of the kind of person he was. He was a man of noble character.

I'm not going to write about all the miracles he did. The writers of his life say that he did many more than we even have record of. These miracles help add evidence to his being who he claimed to be. John 20:30, 31

I'm not going into the 300+ prophecies that he fulfilled which serve as another testimony that he was who he claimed to be; The Messiah, or God in the flesh. The most recent of those prophecies were written about 700 years before he lived.

To learn more about those two items I recommend reading "More Than A

a Carpenter" by Josh McDowell. You can order it on Amazon. He has sold millions of these books and is said to have spoken to more university students around the world than anyone else. He used to be an atheist. He tried to destroy people's faith in Jesus. Not now. While on a global venture to disprove the foundations of the Christian faith he found out there was more than enough information in favor of Jesus to make an intelligent decision about him.

In this writing I want to write about that fact that Jesus was a man of Character, one to be admired.

While I understand that some don't accept Jesus as God in the flesh who came to rescue us from our predicament here on earth, it would say a lot about a person who doesn't even like the kind of life of character Jesus lived and modeled.

Maybe someone doesn't know enough about him to make a good judgment but look at the following list that shows some of the obvious good things about his life. He was not an ordinary, mere man.

To not be in favor of the character traits exhibited by Jesus would seem to suggest that you are then in favor of their opposites.

If you want to verify the list of character traits I wrote below his name then I suggest you get a Bible and go to the New Testament part of it and read Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These were four histories written by people who lived with Jesus and they attest to the fact that

Jesus was:

a man of truth

a teacher of truth

honest

loving

compassionate

a peace maker

a healer

forgiving

gave comfort to people

gave hope to people

gave himself to people

sacrificed for people

encouraged people

gave value to people

did good to people

was not a user of people for his own self interest

stood beside the rejects of society

treated women, children and the sick with respect and compassion

was a protector of the weak and vulnerable

gave people second chances
didn't come to condemn people
expected the best from people
was not a manipulator
was direct with people
was loyal to God
was self controlled
unselfish
generous
wise beyond all others
spoke with confidence and authority
was not violent
fought for justice and was fair
was understanding
was patient
was firm, confident, not wishy washy
was forgiving
was not a 'people' pleaser to gain a following
he didn't say things just to be popular
didn't like formal, rigid religion
was not controlled by fear
was willing to suffer to carry out his cause for people
was not controlled by lust, anger, or greed
lived very simply; not to gain material possessions

willing to die for what he believed in
was humble
was faithful to his word and mission
stood up to temptation
stood up to injustice
did what was right in God's eyes
was courageous
was against all forms of evil
man of integrity, upright
sought to obey and follow God.

So if you don't like that kind of person it seems that you would prefer someone who is:

(The opposite would be a person who is):

a deceiver, liar
teacher of untruths
dishonest, not to be trusted
unloving,
unkind,
mean,
cold, unsympathetic
causes damage, discomfort and pain
is a taker, a user,
un-loyal, unfaithful
disobedient

has no self control
is out of control
selfish
stingy
discourager
not wise, foolish
unsure, goes with flow, changes beliefs to meet the situation
thinks little of others; uses them
is a fighter, violent
is unjust, unfair
not understanding, unsympathetic
impatient (which is selfishness)
is for himself; seeks his own best interest
holds grudges, unforgiving
loves to create fear in others
manipulates, controls
not willing to suffer for anyone
lives for lust, greed, anger, selfishness
lives for stuff, things
uses people to get what he wants
uses or exploits women, children for self interests
proud, and arrogant
only faithful to SELF
his word is unreliable

easily gives in to temptation; weak
only wants the best from others in order to advance his best interests
threatens
is a coward
doesn't stand with you through thick and thin
is against all that doesn't serve his personal pleasure and goals
creates his own definition of what is moral, upright
obeys his desires
vengeful, gets even, mean spirited,
is blaming, condemning

More could be said, BUT here is the point.

You may not believe that Jesus is the Son of God and our Savior (and I would encourage you to take a new look at the Bible if that is the case) but it would be hard to argue that he was anything other than an exceptional person of character.

His life and character is a model for anyone. He is to be admired, respected and copied

unless you don't believe in:

Justice

fairness

humbleness

honesty

directness

truthfulness

self control

respecting others

courage
integrity
uprightness
good morals
obedience
loyalty
compassion
understanding
being loving
forgiving
faithfulness
encouraging to do the right
wisdom
living and teaching truth
giving value to people
protecting people
being patient with people
respecting women, children, ill, down and out
living a simple life; free from greed
and it goes on and on.

To learn more about Jesus and the life he lived, I encourage you to get a Bible and read in the New Testament where it tells the most about him. 4 different men wrote short biographies about what they witnessed being with him.

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Josh McDowell in his book *More Than A Carpenter* has a chapter titled, “Lord, Liar or Lunatic.” (If you haven’t read that, it is a must.)

Here is Josh’s point about Jesus being Lord, Liar or Lunatic:

If Jesus was a LIAR then all he did and said can be rejected because he claimed to be God in the flesh but he wasn’t and he knew it. Then he was a big LIAR and not to be trusted about much of anything.

OR, he was a LUNATIC. He really believed he was God but wasn’t. Many have come saying they were god. If Jesus was a lunatic and really wasn’t God in the flesh even though he believed it, then we can ignore him and his showing up on the timeline of history.

OR if he really was LORD, the Messiah, and he was God who came in the flesh to save us, to rescue us from the mess we have created here in human history then we need to pay attention and we wouldn’t expect anything short of him other than being **the greatest model of character that ever lived.**

If you want to know more about what it means to be a Christian, go to www.apecetreatywithGod.com

And download the “It’s All About Relationship” studies and then watch the four video presentations.

THE REALITY OF JESUS

Source Unknown

Jesus was amazingly concrete and practical. Into an atmosphere filled with speculation and wordy disputation were “men are often drunk with the wine of their own wordiness” He brings the refreshing sense of practical reality. He taught, but He did not speculate.

He did not discourse on the sacredness of motherhood; He suckled as a babe at His mother’s breast, and that scene has forever consecrated motherhood.

He did not argue that life was a growth and character an attainment. “He grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.”

He did not speculate on why temptation should be in this world. He met it, and after forty days struggle with it in the wilderness He conquered and returned, “in the power of the Spirit to Galilee.”

He did not discourse on the dignity of labor. He worked at a carpenter’s bench and His hands were hard with the toil of making yokes and plows, and this forever makes the toil of the hands honorable.

We do not find Him discoursing on the necessity of letting one’s light shine at home among kinsmen and friends. He announced His program of uplift and redemption at Nazareth, His own home, and those who heard “wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of his mouth”

As He came among men He did not try to prove the existence of God. He brought Him. He lived in God, and men looking upon His face could not find it within themselves to doubt God.

He did not argue, as Socrates, the immortality of the soul. He raised the dead.

He did not speculate on how God was a triune God. He said “If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, the Kingdom of God has come to you.” Here we have “I”, “Spirit of God”, and “God”. It was not something to be speculated about, but was a working force for redemption, the casting out of devils and the bringing in of the Kingdom.

He did not teach in a didactic way about the worth of children. He put his hands on them and blessed them, and setting one in their midst said, “Of such is the Kingdom of God” and He raised them from the dead.

He did not argue that God answers prayer. He prayed, sometimes all night, and in the morning, “the power of the Lord was present to heal.”

He did not paint in glowing colors the beauties of friendship and the need for human sympathy. He wept at the grave of his friend.

He did not argue the worth of womanhood and the necessity for giving them equal rights. He treated them with infinite respect, gave to them His most sublime teaching, and when He rose from the dead He appeared first to a woman.

He did not teach in the schoolroom manner the necessity of humility. He took a towel and kneeled down and washed His disciple's feet.

He did not discuss the question of the worth of personality. He went to the poor and outcast and ate with them.

He did not prove how pain and sorrow in the universe could be compatible with the love of God. He took on Himself at the cross everything that spoke against the love of God and through that pain and tragedy and sin showed the very love of God.

He wrote no books. Only once are we told that he wrote and that was in the sand. But He wrote upon the hearts and consciences of people about Him and it has become the world's most precious writing.

He did not discourse on how the weakest human material can be transformed and made to contribute to the welfare of the world. He called to Himself a group of weak men, as the Galilean fishermen, transformed them and sent them out to begin the mightiest movement for uplift and redemption the world has ever seen.

He did not paint a Utopia, far off and unrealizable. He announced that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, and is 'at hand' and can be realized here and now.

He did not discourse on the beauty of love. He loved.

We do not find him arguing that the spiritual life should conquer matter. He walked on water.

He greatly felt the pressing necessity of the physical needs of the people around Him but He did not merely speak in their behalf. He fed 5000 people with five loaves and two fishes.

He told us that the human soul was worth more than the whole material universe, and when He had crossed a storm tossed lake to find a storm tossed soul, ridden with devils, He did not hesitate to sacrifice the 2000 pigs to save this one lost man.

He did not argue the possibility of sinlessness. He presented Himself and said, "Which of you convicts me of sin?"

He did not merely ask men to turn the other cheek when smitten on the one, to go the second mile when compelled to go one, to give the cloak when sued at court and the coat was taken away, to love our enemies and to bless them. He Himself did these very things. The servants struck Him on one cheek, He turned the other and the soldiers struck Him on that. They compelled him to go with them one mile, from Gethsemane to the judgment hall. He went with them two, even to Calvary. They took away His coat at the judgment hall and He gave them his seamless robe at the cross. And in the agony of the cruel torture of the cross He prayed for His enemies, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do."

He did not merely tell us that death need not have terror for us. He rose from the dead and the tomb now glows with light and hope

Many teachers of the world have tried to explain everything. They have changed little or nothing. Jesus explained little and changed everything.

Many teachers have tried to diagnose the disease of humanity. Jesus cures it.

Many teachers have told us why the patient is suffering and that he should bear it with fortitude. Jesus tells him to take up his bead and walk.

Many philosophers speculate on how evil entered the world. Jesus presents himself as the way by which it shall leave.

He did not go into long discussions about the way to God and the possibility of finding Him. He quietly said to men, "I am the Way"

Many speculate with Pilate and ask, "What is Truth?" Jesus shows Himself and says, "I am the truth".

Spencer defines physical life for us as correspondence with environment. Jesus defines life itself but presenting Himself and saying "I am the Life." Anyone who truly looks upon Him knows in the inmost depths of this soul that he is looking on Life itself.

Jesus was a realist. As John puts it: Grace and reality are ours through Jesus Christ.: John 1:17, Moffatt.

HOW COULD ANYONE EVER BE ASHAMED OF BELONGING TO ONE WHO WAS SO GREAT?

JESUS IS GOD IN THE FLESH

By

John Hendee

This is a major message of the Bible and the story of Jesus.

Most don't really comprehend it.

But it is essential to the message about Jesus.

He was not just a good man.

He was not just a religious man.

He was not just a prophet or philosopher.

He was much more.

He claimed to be God in the flesh.

Now, others have claimed that, but Jesus backs up his claims with evidence in the prophecies written about him hundreds of years in advance and by the miracles he performed.

Jesus didn't want to leave any doubts that we would be able to recognize him when he came.

Suppose you and I, never having met, were going to meet at a coffee shop. We could say "Let's have coffee Friday at 7:00AM." Now Friday you might arrive early and have to watch every person who entered the restaurant with no assurance as to whether it was me or not.

But what if I had said, "I will be wearing a tall red hat." That would help pick me out. "And I will wear a yellow coat with large blue dots and a large pair of clown shoes." Well that would make it a whole lot easier to spot me when I walked in. It is not likely anyone else would show up like that. It would make it very easy to identify me.

Jesus made it very easy for us to identify him when he came so there would be not mistakes. We couldn't miss him. To learn more about those prophecies and miracles I recommend you read "More Than A Carpenter by Josh McDowell. You can find it on Amazon or Kindle.

As you will see in this writing Jesus claimed to be God in the flesh, his followers claimed Jesus was God in the flesh, but even his enemies acknowledge that he was claiming to be God. There is no mistaking that he made that claim. That is one of the major reasons he was killed.

Today, many want to make him out to be LESS than he claimed to be. If he is, then you don't have to believe much of anything he said and you certainly don't need to believe in him and surrender yourself to him. And if he isn't then he certainly is not Savior or Lord.

Today most cults and other world religions say that Jesus was just;

A good man

A prophet

Another religious teacher

A son of God....but not God

Or a man who is becoming a God

But Christianity stands by the claim that Jesus was God in the flesh. After all that is what He claimed and He didn't refute or correct others when they said that about him in his presence.

God became a man in order to bring us His message. He loves us and wants to save us from the mess this world and we are in; and he was willing to come and be a part of it and suffer at the hands of evil men in order to prove it.

In becoming a man, God/Jesus also gave us a picture of Himself. He revealed what He (God) is like; loving, sacrificing for those he loves, just, forgiving, unselfish, giving, seeking the best for others, etc.

Read the following passages and see about these claims. At the end we will briefly talk about what it all means.

John 1:1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God.**

John 1:14

¹⁴The **Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.** We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:18

¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but **the one and only Son, who is himself God** and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

John 5:18

¹⁸ For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

John 8:58

⁵⁸ “Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

John 10:30

³⁰ I and the Father are one.”

John 10:33

³³ “We are not stoning you for any good work,” they replied, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

John 13:1

¹³ “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.

14:6-11

⁶ Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸ Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” ⁹ Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. ¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me;

John 20:2

²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

Matthew 9:2,3,6

² Some men brought to him a paralyzed man, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the man, “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” ³ At this, some of the teachers of the law said to themselves, “This fellow is blaspheming!”

⁴ Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?

⁵ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ⁶ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “Get up, take your mat and go home.”

Luke 5:21

²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Romans 9:5

⁵ Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of the Messiah, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

Philippians 2:6

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Colossians 1:15

¹⁵ The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

Colossians 1:19

¹⁹ For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,

Colossians 2:9

⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form,

Titus 2:13

¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

Hebrews 1:3, 5,8,10

¹ In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all

things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³ **The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.** After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. ⁴ So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

⁵ For to which of the angels did God ever say,

"You are my Son;
today I have become your Father".

Or again,

"I will be his Father,
and he will be my Son"?

⁶ And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says,

"Let all God's angels worship him."

⁷ In speaking of the angels he says,

"He makes his angels spirits,
and his servants flames of fire."

⁸ **But about the Son he says,**

"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy."

¹⁰ He also says,

**"In the beginning, Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.**

I John 5:20

²⁰ We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. **He is the true God and eternal life.**

Jude 25

²⁵ to **the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord,** before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

Galatians 1:6-11

⁶ I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ **But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!** ⁹ **As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!**

¹⁰ Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ. ¹¹ I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin.

What does it all mean?

God knew before creation what our needs would be.

God knew before creation that our being created with free will would result in our sinning.

God knew before creation that His system of justice would call for punishment and consequences for sin, or breaking the laws.

God decided before creation that He would become 'one of his own', he would become a man himself and pay the punishment charged to men. He would suffer the consequences for all of man's sins so that justice would be served and man could live free and in peace with God.

Justice had to be served. A price would have to be paid. He was ready to pay it for us.

That is amazing, absolutely amazing.

What an incredible love.

God Himself thought of us, planned for us, chose us, came for us, died and suffered for us, saves us, adopts us, lives in us, helps us, and is preparing a place for us.

One day he will come and take us to be with Him.

Revelation 21 describes a little of what it will be like.

1. Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, **“Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴ ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”**

⁵ He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

⁶ He said to me: **“It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. ⁷ Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. ⁸ But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.”**

What does it mean to you to know that the God who created the universe and this planet loved you enough to become a man, suffer, be rejected and be crucified to help and rescue you from a desperate situation?

Let’s do a little summary.

Before God created the heavens and earth he decided to create man.

His plan was to create us with a free will. Any other option was not acceptable to him.

He wanted to have a genuine, freely chosen relationship with us.

He wanted a family.

His hope was that in creating us we would CHOOSE to love him.

He knew that in having a free will he was running the risk that we would reject him.

Rejection would be tantamount to justifiable condemnation or death.

While he saw no choice but to create us with free will, he also planned for the eventual scenario that we would reject him.

The justice of rejection of the creator would bring condemnation.

Condemnation would bring the death penalty or eternal separation from the creator rejected.

His plan was not to send a representative to press his case against us and see us left guilty and condemned.

His plan was not to have a bull die for us and free us of the charges.

His plan was not to send someone else to pay the penalty for us in order to free us.

His plan, incredulous as it seems, was to become a man himself, submit himself to even more rejection, ridicule, suffering and eventually death as his means of becoming a substitute for us. He came to die in our place, pay the penalty and cancelling the debt we owed for rejecting him. He did that so we could be adopted by him, forgiven and chosen, to be part of his eternal family.

The only motivation he had for doing this was love.

This was unconditional love. We didn't do anything ahead of time to deserve this.

Receiving the personal benefits of this is conditional.

To be forgiven, to receive eternal life, to be raised from the dead one day are conditional upon my accepting all this. It is my choice. I must accept it. He can't force me against my will to accept it.

God calls me to believe it. He has provided a remarkable record of what his plan is and how he has and is carrying it out for our benefit.

God calls me to repent or turn from having rejected him and trying to make someone or something else my god, to declaring that He and only He is my God. He calls me to surrender to him for life and eternity.

God calls me to confess that I believe in Him and that I have become his disciple.

God calls me to take the oath of allegiance through Christian baptism in order to enter this amazing covenant he offers us. This seals the offer. It is official. I am a son of God.

I then spend the rest of my life growing in that relationship with Jesus/God. His goal is that I go on growing and maturing, becoming more like Jesus in purpose, motivation and love.

One day I will either die and be with Him or he will come before my death in his second promised visit to this planet and he will take ALL OF HIS CHILDREN to be with him for eternity in heaven. One way or another I'll be with Him.

He did all of that in order to save us from condemnation so we could live with Him forever.

Oh my gosh, if that were not true we would be facing eternal disaster.

But it IS true.

It is Good News.

And it is amazing.

We are loved.

We have an incredible future with God.

Let's go and show him how much we appreciate what he has done for us.

1 John 2:15-17

¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Love God with all your heart and mind and soul, and love your neighbor as yourself.

Books to read;

Josh McDowell; More Than A Carpenter

WHAT JESUS WANT TO GIVE US

I understand why a lot of people don't like the whole idea of following Jesus, trusting in Him and giving their life to him.

As my good friend says, "the waters have been muddied". Many have rejected him while never really hearing the truth about Jesus.

Many have heard half truths, distortions or just plain lies about Jesus and what he is interested in doing in our lives. Some have had bad experiences with a church, heard a weird preacher or had over bearing religious parents who taught their opinions as the 'law' of God.

Some have had life experiences that make them question the existence of God/Jesus, or at least a loving God. More often than not they have just never had a good conversation with someone that could help them see beyond their bad experiences.

Some realize that to choose Jesus is to acknowledge that their life style is unacceptable to God and to choose Jesus means giving up their life style. If the two collide many will unfortunately choose their own lifestyle.

But most who have rejected Jesus have never made a serious investigation of Jesus for themselves.

If someone will seriously read any of the four short books written about him in the New Testament writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John they will learn something very important. He is NOT interested in making us into religious weirdo's.

Now there are plenty of them around. Those who teach or think that have totally missed it. They think God is interested in making us into people all wrapped up in religious buildings, programs, titles, ceremonies, traditions, rituals, events, services, customs, dress, language, etc.

Jesus doesn't call his followers to a weird religious kind of life but what is a 'normal, healthy and maturing life which he modeled for us.

I have been reading the New Testament for many decades now. What I read there is that Jesus is most interested in is bringing us into his family. He then helps us mature and grow into healthy people; people who love Him and love others. And part of the process of doing that is that he wants to give us and bless us with lots of things that will help us in that growth and maturity.

He calls it the ABUNDANT LIFE. John 10:10

I doubt I have everything on this list, but it is a good start.

You can find all these and more as you read the New Testament in the Bible but here is a list of some of the many things Jesus wants for us.

Jesus wants to:

Give us rest

Give us peace

Give us love

Give us life

Give us hope

Give us purpose

Give us meaning

Give us family

Give us acceptance

Give us freedom

Give us joy and happiness

Give us wisdom

Give us direction for life

Give us a healthy outlook or perspective on life

Give us a new mind, or way of thinking

Give us a new heart

Give us eternal life with him

Give us belonging

Give us value

Give us worth

Give us forgiveness

Give us a second chance

Give us a new beginning

Give us power to face whatever comes

Give us character

Give us integrity

Give us strength in the midst of suffering

Give us understanding

Give us his faithfulness

Give us his loyalty

All this and more comes through His giving Himself for us.

It becomes OURS when we give our self to him.
It is an amazing story.

He came, lived, modeled, suffered, died and was raised from the dead so we can be;

Loving

Kind

Caring

Forgiving

Patient

Supportive

Understanding

Valuing

Encouraging

Long suffering

Gentle

That is, be like Him,

AND BE WITH HIM NOW AND FOREVER.

BECAUSE GOD LOVES ME

Author unknown

Because God loves me, he is slow to lose patience with me.

Because God loves me, He takes the circumstances of my life and uses them in a constructive way for my growth.

Because God loves me, He doesn't treat me as an object to be possessed or manipulated.

Because God loves me, He doesn't need to demonstrate his authority; He is God.

Because God loves me, He touches me. He wants to see me mature and grow in his love.

Because God loves me, He doesn't save up a list of my sins to beat me over the head with.

Because God loves me, He suffers when he sees that I'm not walking in his ways because he sees that I don't trust him.

Because God loves me, He continues trusting in me even at times when I don't trust in myself.

Because God loves me, He never says there is no hope for me; he patiently keeps working with me, loving and disciplining me in such a way that it is hard for me to understand the depth of his love for me.

Because God loves me, He doesn't renounce me even when many of my friends do.

Because God loves me, He stands with me when I have reached the end of my desperation, when I see the reality and I compare myself with his righteousness, holiness, beauty and love.

It is in a moment like that, that I can really believe the reality that God loves me.

GRACE: THE ESSENCE OF LIFE WITH JESUS

By
John Hendee

If you don't understand Grace you are missing a critical aspect of Christianity.

The New Testament starts with Grace in John 1:16, 17

"Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

And it ends with grace in Revelation 22:21. This last verse in the Bible says *"And the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen."*

C. S. Lewis once walked into a meeting of religious leaders in heated debate. The question was what makes Christianity different from other religions? He quickly responded, "Oh that is easy...it is Grace."

No other religion has grace like Jesus does.

Few people treat others with grace and few receive grace from others.

Grace is so important that Paul asked some early Christians why they were turning away from this aspect of their new life in Christ. He wondered why they would go back to a religious life style of trying to earn their salvation through being good.

Galatians 1:6 ⁶ *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— ⁷ which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! ⁹ As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!*

Grace is one of the things that makes Christianity unique and different from manmade religion.

Jesus is the only person who has ever lived who shows us what God's grace is.

If you leave out grace you end up with man's religion.

Take grace out and you have 'gutted' Christianity it of its richness and uniqueness.

Take this out and you take Christ out of Christianity. He is Grace.

If you understand and accept grace, you can have an incredible relationship with God. He will provide you with everything you need to live life here on earth and then into eternity.

What is GRACE?

We must start by first defining another Biblical word then we will define Grace.

MERCY: Due to God's mercy for us we **DON'T GET WHAT WE DESERVE**. What do we deserve? Condemnation; being under a curse, death and eternal separation from God. Due to God's love and desire to free us from that he sent Christ to pay OUR penalty, to free us from OUR condemnation and debt so we can live in freedom. He paid the price. We must believe and accept this amazing act of Mercy. Once we have accepted that free gift we need a lot of help to be able to live our life in Christ.

[Titus 3:5](#) *"he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his **mercy**. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit:*

By His Grace **WE GET WHAT WE DON'T DESERVE!**

Ephesians 1 ³ *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*** ⁴ *For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

He has provided us with everything we need for life and eternity. This is a provision of His Grace. It is because he gives us His Grace. It is because He loves us. He planned all of this before creation.

What have we done or what can we do to deserve, earn or merit HIS Love, Salvation, Forgiveness, Being with us, New birth, Adoption as sons, Citizenship in His Kingdom, Promised resurrection, Freedom from accusation, His Spirit living in us, Remembering our sins no more, Accessibility to His throne, Hope, and Overwhelming victory in life and over death?

What have WE DONE to move God to send His Son (or to become a man himself) to die a horrible, torturous death for us in order to provide us with everything we need now and for eternity?

NOTHING, NOTHING, NOTHING AND NOTHING.

We can only accept it.

Did you get that? **NOTHING!**

We aren't freely given these things because we are good, go to church services, help in church activities, sing in a choir, become a Christian leader, avoid ever sinning again, treat everyone kindly, pray often in a certain place or position with a certain tone of voice, carry out religious traditions and ceremonies, or belong to the right denomination.

We are given all these things by God's GRACE.

It is freely offered to us by God because of his incredible love for us.
He is our creator. He invites us to become His children.

God's Mercy and Grace go hand in hand. With one he **frees us**, with the other he **gifts us**.
You can't have one without the other. They are two dimensions of what God has done for us.

God's Mercy opens the door to salvation for us.
It makes it all possible.
Salvation is offered to all.
God's love in Christ dying for us was unconditional love.
He loved us and died for us while we were yet sinners, rejecting him.
We didn't deserve him dying for us.
We hadn't earned it.
We hadn't been good enough or religious enough.
He died for us and paid the price by his mercy.
By his mercy he did for us what we didn't deserve but what we definitely needed.

Because of that we are offered an escape, freedom from what we deserve. Justice calls for consequences. Jesus took the penalty for our sins. He paid the debt that was owed to God.

So, if we accept Jesus and his dying in our place, accept him as our substitute, then by God's mercy we don't get what we deserve.

That is incredible. We are free.

While God's mercy opens the door to make salvation possible, grace gives us everything we need to live IN CHRIST now and for eternity.

This was a calculated risk on God's part. He had no guarantee that we would accept what Jesus did for us. Many rejected Jesus. They killed him. Many rejected his first disciples. All but one of the Apostles were killed for no reason other than being disciples his disciples.

Now grace is when we get what we don't deserve, can't earn or gain on our own.

Let's go straight to the New Testament, the New Covenant writings and see what we can learn about God's GRACE. As you read these verses ask yourself what they teach us about God's Grace; what are the lessons being taught us? Jot down at least one thought you gain from each passage on the line below each passage. Let's go to school!

What are you learning about GRACE?

[John 1:14](#) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of **grace** and truth.

[Acts 13:43](#) When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the **grace** of God.

[Acts 15:11](#) No! We believe it is through the **grace** of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

[Romans 3:24](#) and all are justified freely by his **grace** through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

[Romans 5:2](#) through whom we have gained access by faith into this **grace** in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.

[Romans 5:17](#) For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God’s abundant provision of **grace** and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

[Romans 5:21](#) so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also **grace** might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[Romans 6:14](#) For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under **grace**

[Romans 11:6](#) And if by **grace**, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, **grace** would no longer be **grace**

[1 Corinthians 15:10](#) But by the **grace** of God I am what I am, and his **grace** to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the **grace** of God that was with me.

[2 Corinthians 1:12](#) Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's **grace**.

[2 Corinthians 4:15](#) All this is for your benefit, so that the **grace** that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.

[2 Corinthians 6:1](#) As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's **grace** in vain.

[2 Corinthians 8:6](#) So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of **grace** on your part.

[2 Corinthians 8:7](#) But since you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you —see that you also excel in this **grace** of giving.

[2 Corinthians 8:9](#) For you know the **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

[2 Corinthians 12:9](#) But he said to me, “My **grace** is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me

[Galatians 1:6](#) I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the **grace** of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—

[Galatians 2:20-22](#) ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the **grace** of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!”

[Galatians 5:4](#) You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from **grace**.

[Ephesians 1:7](#) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s **grace**

[Ephesians 2:5](#) made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by **grace** you have been saved.

[Ephesians 2:7](#) in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his **grace**, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

[Ephesians 2:8](#) For it is by **grace** you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

[Ephesians 3:7](#) I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s **grace** given me through the working of his power.

[2 Thessalonians 2:16](#) May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his **grace** gave us eternal encouragement and good hope.

[2 Timothy 1:9](#) He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and **grace**. This **grace** was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.

[Titus 3:7](#) so that, having been justified by his **grace**, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

[Hebrews 4:16](#) Let us then approach God’s throne of **grace** with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find **grace** to help us in our time of need.

[Hebrews 12:15](#) See to it that no one falls short of the **grace** of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

[Hebrews 13:9](#) Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by **grace**, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so.

[1 Peter 4:10](#) Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s **grace** in its various forms.

[1 Peter 5:10](#) And the God of all **grace**, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

[1 Peter 5:12](#) [*Final Greetings*] With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true **grace** of God. Stand fast in it.

[2 Peter 3:18](#) But grow in the **grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen

[Jude 1:4](#) For certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are ungodly people, who pervert the **grace** of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

What does grace do in our daily life?

It gives us joy and peace.

It makes us grateful.

It moves us to please the ONE who has been so kind, loving and gracious to us.

It changes our motivation from being “I have to be good in order to be saved” to

“I want to be pleasing and obedient to my Heavenly Father to show Him how much I appreciate all He has done for me. There is no other way to show my gratitude.”

Jesus said “If you love me obey me.”

Titus 2:11-13 *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. ¹² It teaches us to **say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,** ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,*

1 Peter 2:16 Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover up for evil; live as servants of God.

I remember reading the story of a diplomat living in the U.S. as part of his country's Ambassadors team. He was taking advantage of ‘diplomatic immunity’. The purpose of diplomatic immunity is to allow Diplomats from one country to work in another under protection of the agreement that they can't be arrested for breaking the other nations' laws. The purpose of this is to allow them to go about their important work without living in fear of doing something wrong or breaking a law they don't know about. They need to be free to do their work, not living in jail. So many countries give mutual diplomatic immunity to the diplomats from other countries.

Now, this one diplomat had taken advantage of this law. He was robbing, sexually abusing women and being violent. He had been arrested many, many times. Every time he showed his Diplomat Card and had to be released. But he reached the breaking point. He wasn't accidentally

or unknowingly breaking these laws. He was living as if there were no laws for him and he was above and beyond the law. Not so. Finally the U.S. government kicked him out of the country.

I John ⁷ *Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard.* ⁸ *Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining.* ⁹ *Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness.* ¹⁰ *Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble.* ¹¹ *But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.*

Reasons for Writing

¹² *I am writing to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.* ¹³ *I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.* ¹⁴ *I write to you, dear children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

On Not Loving the World

¹⁵ *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father^[d] is not in them.* ¹⁶ *For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.* ¹⁷ *The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

Grace is a response of God to help us in our helpless situation.

We are saved by God's Mercy and Grace.

That applies to us before we became a disciple of Christ.

That applies to us after we became a disciple of Christ.

Obedience is our response to God's grace.

The whole salvation process, the whole restoration and maintaining our relationship with God, the plan of making us right with God is based on our accepting His offer. The entire process from start to finish is based on our faith in what God has done for us.

Romans 1:17 *For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed- a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."*

This is SO important to understand.

There seems to be a shift in gears for many from when they first become Christians to after they are Christians for a while.

At first most seem to understand and accept that their being saved is a gift from God. After a while they start thinking and acting like their salvation as a Christian is now based on their performance, achievements and accomplishments. Hey, it doesn't change.

What saves us?

All the good we do? No!

That didn't save us **before** and that won't save us **after**.

Paul wrote that if we can be saved by good works, then Jesus died in vain. He didn't need to suffer and die as he did if we could have earned it. He could have just said to BE GOOD AND WORK IT OUT ON YOUR OWN.

But it was impossible to save ourselves by keeping the law or being good or religious. The Law proved that. We aren't that good.

Paul wrote the following in

Galatians 1 ⁶ *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—* ⁷ *which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.* ⁸ *But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God's curse!* ⁹ *As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!*

We don't deserve to be:

forgiven,

justified,

acquitted,

exonerated,

adopted into God's family and

given eternal life with God

This is a FREE gift from God.

We can't earn it

merit it,

win it

work for it, etc.

Salvation is not a payment for being good,

going to church,

stopping all one's bad habits

becoming a religious leader,

belonging to the right denomination

following the right preacher

winning a lot of people to Jesus

etc.

We aren't saved because of the good things we have done in the past.

We aren't saved because of the good things we are doing now.

We won't be saved because of the good things we do in the future.

We are not saved because of what WE do but are saved because of what HE DID.

We will be saved by the GRACE of God, what he has done for us not what we will do for him.

We can only accept it. And we must, or we will be lost.

It cost Jesus' life for God to give us this.

While it is FREE it is conditional.

We must accept it.

We must live according to the Covenant.

We must be sincere and be 'faithful' to Him till we die.

Jesus said "Be faithful till death." Don't turn back. Don't take it for granted.

He gave his life for me.

In exchange he asks me to give my life to him.

I have to accept it by:

believing in Jesus John 3:16

repenting and making Jesus the Lord or King of my life, Acts 2:38

confessing my faith to others Romans 10:9,10

being baptized into Jesus; which is taking my oath of allegiance into the N.C. Matthew 28:18-20

then living as a follower of Christ till I die. Matthew 28:18-20

Understanding God's mercy and grace changes our life and motivation.

It increases our love for God.

No one else loves us like he does.

No one else has so much interest in us.

No one else has done so much for us.

No one else has taken such a risk for us.

No one else has invested so much for us.

Understanding grace changes my motivation for seeking to be like Jesus, for seeking to mature and grow and stay away from sin.

Trying to be saved by being good enough, nice enough, kind enough and religious enough will result in frustration, desperation, comparisons and being judgemental.

Living in God's grace should result in my being kinder, more loving, patient, understanding etc. It should result in my acting with others as God has acted with me.

If I believe (as most all man made religions teach) that I will be saved IF I'm good enough, I won't know till I die if I have made it or not. So I will live my life with uncertainty, doubts and fear. I will not know until it is too late if I have been good enough. This belief can lead to my "throwing the towel in", feeling it is helpless, because it really is. Why try?

Or it can result in my becoming arrogant, judgmental, self righteous, seeking religious superiority over others in any number of ways hoping I at least look better than most of the rest.

It can lead one to an endless rush of trying to earn what in the end one can't earn. No one can be good enough to free themselves of sin. No one can be good enough to save themselves. If that were possible Jesus didn't need to die for us.

Galatians 2:21 I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

If it were possible to save myself I would end up making myself the focus of my life. It would all be about ME.

It would be all about what I do,

what I don't do,

what I accomplish,

what I succeed at.

I'd be trying to make myself look good to save myself.

That is a dead end road.

MERCY IS BEING RELEASED FROM THE DEATH SENTENCE.

GRACE IS BEING GIVEN ALL I NEED TO LIVE IN CHRIST FOR NOW AND ETERNITY

My motivation for avoiding sin, for being the best I can be and for pleasing God changes when I understand God's grace.

Think about it. *THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO SHOW MY GRATITUDE TO GOD FOR MY SALVATION OTHER THAN TRUSTING HIM AND OBEYING HIM.*

WE DON'T DESERVE SALVATION AND WE CAN'T BRAG ABOUT EARNING IT.

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN TO US?

GRACE GIVES US SECURITY. It is based on God's faithfulness not my perfect performance.

GRACE GIVES US HOPE. God is faithful to His word.

GRACE GIVES US MOTIVATION. It makes me so grateful I don't want to let Him down knowing what He has done for me and that He is counting on me returning His love in obedient living.

Romans 12:1,2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

Paul warns us to not fall from Grace. What is that? It is when we go back to religion to save us. It doesn't work. It won't work. It can't work.

Don't forget how much God loves you.

Now go and live in freedom and grace and live for and serve your Father, King and Friend.

May the Peace and Grace of God be with you, in you and around you.

GOD LEADS A PRETTY SHELTERED LIFE!

Author Unknown

At the end of time, billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Some of the groups near the front talked heatedly – not with cringing shame, but with belligerence!

"How can God judge us? How can He know about suffering?" snapped a joking brunette. She jerked back a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. "We endured terror, beatings, torture and death!"

In another group, a black man lowered his collar. "What about this?" he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. "Lynched for no crime but being black! We suffocated in slave ships, were wrenched from loved ones and toiled till only death gave release!"

Far out across the plain were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering He permitted in His world. How lucky God was to live in heaven where all was sweetness and light, where there was no weeping, no fear, no hunger and no hatred. Indeed, what did God know about what man had been forced to endure in this world? "After all, God leads a pretty sheltered life," they said.

So each group sent out a leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. There was a Jew, a black man, an untouchable from India, an "illegitimate", a person from Hiroshima, a woman disfigured by her husband, and one from a Siberian slave camp. In the center of the plain they consulted with each other. At last they were ready to present their case. It was rather simple: Before God would be qualified to be their judge; He must endure what they had endured. Their decision was that God "should be sentenced to live on earth –as a man!"

But, because He was God, they set certain safeguards to be sure He could not use His divine powers to help Himself.

Let Him be born a Jew.

Let the legitimacy of His birth be doubted so that none will know who His father really is.

Let Him champion a cause so just, but so radical that it brings down upon Him the hate, condemnation, and eliminating efforts of every major traditional and established religious authority.

Let Him try to describe what no man has ever seen, tasted, heard or smelled – let Him try to communicate God to men.

Let Him be betrayed by His dearest friends.

Let Him be indicted on false charges, tried before a prejudiced jury, and convicted by a cowardly judge.

Let Him see what it is to be terribly alone and completely abandoned by every living thing.

Let Him be tortured and let Him die!

Let Him die the most humiliating death – with common thieves.

As each leader announced his portion of the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the great throng of people.

When the last had finished pronouncing sentence, there was a long silence. No one uttered another word. No one moved. For suddenly all knew. . . God had already served His sentence.

GOD IS NOT A KILL JOY

That is what I used to think before I got to know him. I've know many others who believed the same thing.

I used to think that God wanted to rob me of fun, pleasure and all that is enjoyable. I assumed he wanted to suck all the juice, the joy out of my life and I would have to live an austere life as a monk in a monastic kind of world. I assumed life would be boring, in black and white with no color, odorless and tasteless.

Then I finally figured it out. Thankfully. Man, did I ever have it wrong. I learned the truth. I was living under a cloud of misunderstanding, confusion and incorrect thinking. It was all a deception and a lie.

I guess you could say it depends what you are looking for in life.

If you believe this life is all there is, that when you die you are dead as a dog then you might as well go for all the gusto and pleasure you can find in every 24 hour day you have left.

If that is the case, then all relationships and issues like faithfulness or commitment will be defined by who you think can offer you the most pleasure, satisfaction, happiness, fun, etc. at any given moment in your life. "As long as you deliver I might stay around." When all that diminishes or stops, when others stop delivering what you want then you'll be moving on, 'gone fishing', looking for the next best source of those things you want.

Or, if it is all 'good' with ONE, why not enjoy all of the above with 2 or 3 or more? Why limit yourself? It isn't about others. It is about you. And it is about pleasure not limits. 'Limits' becomes a 'four letter word'. 'Limits' is redefined to saying I'm not limiting myself to you alone, or to you if you stop delivering what I want, when I want it, how I want it, how often I want it, etc. Actually I don't any want limits imposing or keeping me from getting what I want.

Actually God agrees with that sentiment.

Paul wrote of that in **1 Corinthians 15:32** *If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? **If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."***

He was saying that if there is no life after this one, if we have nothing but 'human hopes (that is to have NO hope) we might as well go for the gusto, let us eat and drink because tomorrow, when we die it is ALL over. We are as dead as dogs. The party is over. There is nothing more.

But Paul knew there was more for those who choose it.

And that MORE is that we have to choose whether to live in relationship with God or not.

It is whether I want to live with Him or without Him. And to choose to live with him is NOT to choose a monastic, colorless, tasteless, dull and boring life. It just isn't so.

There are descriptions of those who live as if there is no tomorrow or life after death in the Bible.

Ephesians 4:18-19 describes those who reject God for 'freedom'. It says they

Are darkened in their understanding

Separated from the life of God because of their ignorance

That is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

Having lost all sensitivity

They have given themselves over to sensuality

So as to indulge in every kind of impurity

With a continual lust for more.

II Peter 2 gives a much longer list and the consequences for pursuing this so called life of 'freedom.' See it at the end of this paper.

Now in my book it would not be loving of God to say nothing about the negative consequences of choosing this false 'freedom' over a relationship with him? That would not be very loving for sure. I'm grateful he warns me. The alternative route is cold, ugly and deadly.

The issue with God is that it really is all about living in relationship with Him. That is why he created us in the first place.

Proverbs 8:36 makes an interesting statement. *"Whoever fails to find me harms himself. And all who hate me love death."* To find and accept a relationship with God is a blessing to our selves. It is helpful, beneficial and healing. To reject Him, to hate Him, means we love death in place of living with Him now and for eternity.

Romans 5:11 LB *"Now we rejoice in our **wonderful new relationship with God**-all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done in dying for our sins-making us friends of God."*

God is NOT a kill joy, but He is faithful in doing what is in our best interest.

God limits himself for our best interest. A hedonist doesn't understand the idea of limiting oneself for the best interest of others. They only think about and do what they think is for their own best interest.

The hedonist's only limit is NOT limiting himself from doing what he wants. Anything that puts limits on oneself is bad. He wants freedom to do what he wants, when he wants, how he wants, how often he wants, where ever he wants and with whomever he wants.

But God is interested in what is good for our best interest, what will benefit and help us in life.

So rather than being a Kill Joy, God is:

He is a protector

He is our Father

He is our Friend

He is our rescuer

He is our forgiver

He is our teacher

He is our guide

He wants to bless, enrich, and shower us with his gifts.

And what Friend or Father wouldn't protect their kids from that which is dangerous, harmful, damaging, etc.

Think of all the things parents say to warn their kids; here is a short sample:

"Son, don't play in the fire, don't eat so much candy, don't run into the street for the ball without looking both ways, don't eat or drink anything with a skull and crossbones on the container, don't put your face too close to the mouth of that strange dog, don't take drugs, don't stick your finger in the socket, don't pick your nose in public and don't eat your buggers, don't watch so much TV, don't steal, don't swear, don't be sarcastic or rude to people, don't bully others, don't run holding scissors or a knife pointed toward you, don't be so lazy, don't put pins

in your mouth, don't run in the store, don't dive head first in the shallow end, don't hang out with that kid, don't drive too fast, you can't date him/her, you can't go 'there'." And it goes on and on.

Now is a parent a 'kill joy' for trying to warn their kids of all the dangers in life. No. Now at the moment the kid might think so. But those who don't listen will normally suffer bad consequences. The parents are trying to protect their kids and save them from unnecessary pain and suffering. **To not warn them of potential danger and damage would be irresponsible, cruel and unloving.**

And how many kids rebel at the LIMITATIONS their parents put on them.

It is hard being a parent.

There are many tough decisions a parent has to make for their kids.

It is tough disciplining your kids, teaching them and at times putting needed protective restrictions in their life.

Parents want to be loved, liked, trusted and accepted by their kids too.

The goal of a healthy parent is not to ROB THEIR KIDS OF SOMETHING.

They want the best for them.

Our earthly parents aren't perfect and don't understand all, but God does.

Hebrews 10:⁹ *Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!* ¹⁰ *They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; **but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.***

We need to learn to trust him.

One of the greatest teachers of all in life is facing the natural consequences of our choices. And oh, they can be a harsh teacher. Now there is a way to avoid the bad or negative consequences of bad decisions. It starts with trusting someone who is wise and trustworthy. In our case that would be God.

Jesus told a story that is best known as the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). In this story we see how God most often operates in our lives. He 'raises' us, teaches us, gives us a model, a conscience but he also gives us a free will. In the story the younger brother thinks he is missing

out on something in life staying on the farm. So he takes his inheritance and moves to the city where he thinks he has freedom to do what he wants and to pursue the GOOD LIFE.

The interesting thing in this story is that the father let him go. He had taught him how to live. The son rejected it. So the father decided it was time for the son to see that there are consequences for bad choices. In the end he couldn't stop him unless he chained him to the barn as a prisoner. So the son went to the city.

Oh the son must have had some really FUN times in the city, for a while. But then it all hit the fan. The party was over. It ended. There is an old saying that for every kick there is a kick back. The son learned the hard truth of that.

During this time the father didn't go off to the city to beg the son to come home. He let him suffer the natural consequences of his bad choices. And when he 'came to his senses' he went home. The GOOD LIFE was there, with his father, family and friends. It was all about relationship. He had taken that for granted and miss it.

God Is Not a Kill Joy. He is a joy giver and a protector.

He is out to save us, protect us and lead us down healthy paths, not self destructive paths.

It is up to us whether we trust him or not.

He is trustworthy.

He will teach us. Our experiences in trusting Him and following His word will show us.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

When we renew our way of thinking, when we trust God and his ways and his will, and we live that way and 'test' it or experience it firsthand. Our way of thinking will be transformed as we experience what is good and pleasing, what is enjoyable and satisfying to us. His ways, his will is perfect. Our 'old man' ways are corrupt and destructive.

We are talking about RELATIONSHIP.

I wrote a book years ago. I lost the working manuscript but the title was already burned in my brain.

The title was

2 Words that will make or break any relationship

The two words are “*you’re important.*”

When we commit ourselves to a healthy relationship we need to communicate that the other is important to us. That is what we tell them. Now we need to live it out.

It is the same with God.

When I become a follower of Jesus, because of the importance of the relationship I have with him, I will seek to avoid anything that will replace him or damage the relationship I have with him.

There are many ways we can send the “You’re Not Important” message. It is for the most part “living the way I want to” and ignoring the wants, wishes and will of God.

Trusting him and obeying him are the only ways I can show him that he really is the MOST important one in my life.

God wants to save us from pain, suffering, disappointment, disillusionment, emptiness, loneliness, etc.

He wants us to be in relationship with him and being in relationship with him is a billion times better than all the shallow, temporary, plastic ‘fun’ the world can offer me.

In Hebrews 10:24-27 it says the following about Moses:

*By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ **He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.** ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.*

He understood. He got it. As the son of Pharaoh’s daughter he could ‘have all the world could offer him’. He could have the best of the riches, women, wine, houses, horses, the best of food, vacations, power, status, entertainment, etc. But Moses chose something better. He was looking down the road. He knew something better was to come.

Sin brings pain and suffering. God warns us of the consequences of sin so we can avoid the pain and suffering. That doesn’t make him a KILL JOY. That makes him my loving Father and Savior.

II Peter 2 gives us warnings of those who offer ‘freedom’ that really turns out to be slavery and destruction. They are the KILL JOYS. Their supposed freedom and fun end in death. Their so

called freedom kills. Their freedom ends up with your EATING YOUR OWN VOMIT! Look at the descriptions of them and their life below. It is NOT a life of freedom but slavery.

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. **They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves.** ² Many will follow their **depraved conduct** and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. ³ In their greed these teachers **will exploit you with fabricated stories.** Their **condemnation** has long been **hanging over them**, and their **destruction** has not been sleeping.

⁴ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment; ⁵ if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; ⁶ if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; ⁷ and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the depraved conduct of the lawless ⁸ (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)— ⁹ if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials and to **hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.** ¹⁰ This is **especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the flesh and despise authority.**

Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to heap abuse on celestial beings; ¹¹ yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not heap abuse on such beings when bringing judgment on them from the Lord. ¹² But these people **blaspheme in matters they do not understand.** They are **like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.**

¹³ **They will be paid back with harm** for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are **blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures** while they feast with you. ¹⁴ With **eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable;** they are **experts in greed—an accursed brood!** ¹⁵ They **have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of Balaam** son of Bezer, who **loved the wages of wickedness.** ¹⁶ But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey—an animal without speech—who spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

¹⁷ These people are **springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.** ¹⁸ For **they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, they entice people** who are just escaping from those who live in error. ¹⁹ **They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for “people are slaves to whatever has mastered them.”** ²⁰ If they have escaped the corruption of

the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and are overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. ²¹ It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. ²² Of them the proverbs are true: **“A dog returns to its vomit”** and, “A sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud.”

GOD IS NOT A KILL JOY

NEW CHOICES, STRESS AND CONFLICTS RESULTING FROM RESTORING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

By

John Hendee

Choosing Christ and being in Christ creates a new internal conflict or tension in our life. Don't be surprised or frightened by it. It is normal. Becoming conscious of the tension reminds us that we have free will and will spend the rest of our life exercising it every day. While it is a challenge, it is a good thing.

You can use this conflict to deepen your love for Jesus and strengthening your walk with Him. Jesus promised us he will be with us in this 'spiritual war' for our soul. We are not alone.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus does not remove us from temptations. Temptations will not only continue, but in one sense they will become stronger than in the past. Before Christ we pretty much did what we wanted. Now that we are living for Christ, the old ways are in opposition to the new ways of Christ. The inner Old Man will call out to us to return to him and his familiar and often pleasure-able ways (which often created conflicts, suffering and damage). The Old Man doesn't give up easily. He has been rejected. He won't go down without a fight.

This new conflict is a result of our choosing to follow Christ and His way of life rather than continue in the destructive ways of the Old Man (or "flesh" as the New Testament calls it).

Remember that every temptation, every conflict and every tug and pull toward the old way is an opportunity to show your love and trust in Jesus, our Savior.

Paul talks about this tension, conflict and war in **Galatians 5:16-25** ¹⁶ *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* ¹⁷ *For the **flesh** desires what is contrary to the **Spirit**, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. **They are in conflict with each other**, so that you are not to do whatever you want.* ¹⁸ *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.* ¹⁹ *The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.* ²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no*

law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Let's take a look at this passage.

First Paul says, "¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other."

He calls us to WALK BY THE SPIRIT. That means to trust and obey the Spirit of God as he leads us through the Word of the New Covenant writings and his inner promptings which will always be in line with the Word. The Spirit will never lead or call us to do anything sinful. Paul is calling us to live our life conscious of the ONE we have invited into our life. We should live to please him, love him and make him comfortable as an invited guest in our life.

He points out that we will have to daily choose to do what the Spirit of Christ calls us to do rather than succumb to the desires of the flesh. The desires of the flesh don't die out when we become a Christian. What the flesh of Old Man wants is contrary to what God wants. It always has been and it always will be. The Old Man is selfish, self centered and immature. Following him will result in pain and suffering at some point. The writer of Proverbs says "*There is a way that seems right to man but the end thereof is death.*" That WAY is the way of the Old Man. It seems right. It is what we "want". But God, His Word and very often our conscience will tell us that way is wrong, damaging, and destructive. If we believe the Old Man and follow him we will suffer and lose. If we understand that God is trying to save us from that damaging and destructive life style then we will trust Him and 'live by the Spirit'.

The flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit and vice versa. THEY ARE IN CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER. Our choosing to follow Christ puts us in the middle of that conflict.

We are not alone there. We have God, His Word, His Spirit, His family and our conscience to guide us into the truth so we can choose the right way. But in the end we are the ones who have to choose. We make the final choice. Be careful.

We **have** to choose. Our choices are what prove we have free will. It proves that God hasn't made us like robots with no choices in life. It also proves how much God loves us in that He works by persuasion in our life - not force. He seeks to teach us, call us, lead us and His Spirit even prays for us to choose the right path and make the right decisions.

It is similar to getting married. Before marriage you have the choice to date and pursue whomever you want. You are single. You haven't made a choice and a commitment to one person. Most 'play the field' for a while. BUT once you feel you have found 'the one', you propose

or accept a proposal and you marry. Then everything changes and you understand (or at least should understand this) that you have made a decision and a commitment to live being faithful to ONE person. That means we will STOP 'playing the field'. The search is OVER. You have entered an exclusive, committed relationship.

Now, does your attraction to others cease? Most will find in time that it does not. You will still find others attractive, interesting and desire-able. For most newly married that doesn't even seem like a possibility. "What do I need another for? I'm happy with what I have."

But most people will find that in time the Old Life of being single and playing the field is still in their mind and still inviting. They might start getting a little bored with their mate or irritations and disappointments with them might open the door for the mind to wander. Many will find it tempting to look or dream, and maybe even flirt and pursue NEW opportunities. While that might be stimulating at the time of doing it, only damage and danger await that person down the road. Many will be affected by their 'unfaithfulness' and 'flirting' pursuits. It is amazing how one can justify their 'new' pursuits.

There is a conflict for this person. They know deep down they shouldn't be doing what they are doing.

But the temptation is strong.

Only the strong, those of character and maturity, those whose word is true and those whose heart is faithful and committed to keeping their word, the promise of fidelity they made will resist the temptations to follow those illicit opportunities. They are illicit because you promised your love to ONE. That doesn't leave room for roaming around looking, flirting with and playing with others.

Only those who are wise enough to consider and value the importance of their word and their commitment they made to their mate will stand strong. Only those who consider the damage that will be done by their illicit pursuits will know how to say NO and stop those perilous ventures.

Only those who ignore all of that will follow the temptations that are out there. And they will pay a price for that. It is a huge conflict.

The CONFLICT is a result of making the commitment in the first place. If you don't make the commitment you are 'free to play the field'. But you have chosen the relationship and made the commitment FOR ALL THE WONDERFUL BENEFITS THAT WILL COME FROM THE MARRIAGE.

There will be the discovery at some point that the person you 'chose' isn't perfect and has a number of defects. Those moments can make one more vulnerable to new pursuits. So in self pity one can justify going after another or others.

With that desire comes the CONFLICT. The call to return to the 'good old days of playing the field, having a number of options' pops it's head up for many.

Once having made a commitment you then have a field of ONE. Your mate. And the potential and joys that can come from that will only be known by those who remain loving, giving, romantic and faithful to their special one.

IT IS THE SAME WITH CHRIST. He will be faithful. We don't ever have to doubt that. The question now becomes "What about us?" Will we be faithful to Him?

In marriage one may have to renew their commitment every day as one goes 'online' and sees all the opportunities to 'be unfaithful' there on pornography sites. Then there are the 'attractions' and opportunities to flirt at work, at church, in the neighborhood, club, team, etc. There are others who will flirt with you and will be willing to go with you down the road of unfaithfulness.

There are thousands of opportunities which will create CONFLICT. Do I say NO, first to myself and then to the opportunity? Do I turn and shut it out, shun it, reject it, turn, and walk or run away, or do I tempt myself, play with it and tease myself with it?

Rejecting it and running from it would be in the best interest of the committed relationship.

God is also hoping that when faced with the calls of the Old Man, the Flesh, that we will say NO, reject the offer, turn and walk or run away rather than tease ourselves with it which will often lead to our being weakened and in the end damaged as we give in to it.

It is a war. Satan and the Old Man want their way and our allegiance to them. God is calling us to trust Him and be faithful to the relationship we have with him. One can't love or serve TWO Masters or Lovers. We can't live to please the Old Man and God. We can try and walk with one foot on each side of the line but it won't last. One or the other will eventually win out. God is trusting that we will honor our commitment with him and keep both feet on His side choosing to stay away, far away from the line.

Paul goes on to say that we shouldn't and we don't have to gratify the longings or desire for the Old Life. The results of that life style are disastrous. He lists them in Galatians 5:19-21

Sexual immorality

Idolatry (making other people or things a god in my life; giving my loyalty and allegiance to it)

Hatred (that is arrogance out of control, bitterness and self righteousness)

Discord (conflicts, arguing, fighting, being nasty)

Jealousy (Being selfish, not trusting others, running others down, maybe wanting what they have.)

Fits of rage (that is an adult throwing a baby kind of tantrum; oh so common but so selfish and immature.)

Selfish ambition (That is living like a baby. I want what I want now and if I don't get it, watch out.)

Dissensions (that is fighting, arguing, disagreeing, putting down, degrading, etc.)

Factions (taking sides, not understanding, being intolerant and dividing up.)

Envy (That is just another form of selfishness; I deserve more or better and I'd better get it or else.)

Drunkenness (drinking, drugs, over eating, over indulging in any number of things, are self punishment and a way to punish others or try to numb pain in my life. I only end up causing more pain to myself and others.)

Orgies (Really, like more and more unfaithful sex is going to make life better. Eeeerrrrr. They only make one a slave and unable to ever be able to live faithfully and be content with the 'best' life offers.)

THEN PAUL SAYS : *"I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."*

Well, that is rather obvious. How foolish do we think God is, to die for us to prove how much he loves us and then let us live as total rebels? How can we think that we are still going to get life from him?

It doesn't work that way. Granted we will never be perfect in all our ways BUT flagrant rebellion and rejection of God and his ways is OUR saying God really means nothing to us and we will continue to live how we want in spite of the relationship we have with God. And God says, "Well, that is your choice."

Paul goes on to say that *"those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."*

We chose Jesus. We rejected Satan and the Old Man or sinful nature (flesh). It was a choice. Now our responsibility is to faithfully live the rest of our life in loyalty to our word and our relationship with God.

To us “THE SINGLE LIFE” is dead. It is over. It has ended. WE must not, we will not go back to its ways. We have no need to dwell on the ‘single life’, to revisit it or entertain returning to it. We will not foolishly entertain the thought that we will stay in our marriage and secretly pursue others at the same time. THAT DOESN’T WORK.

We have committed ourselves to our new LOVE. While it is a war, it isn’t always easy and while it may be very challenging at times, it is the pathway to true and genuine love.

Choosing the way of the Spirit means trusting and obeying God. It means putting our relationship with Him before all else in life. He becomes the guiding and controlling factor in our life. We submit all to Him and his ways knowing and believing that is for our best interest. It is the only way we can show God we truly and genuinely love him and appreciate what he has done for us.

That life will be characterized by and controlled by: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Following giving that list Paul says, “*Against such things there is no law.*” We normally aren’t going to be arrested and sent to jail for being loving, joyful, patient, kind, good etc. WE won’t be responsible or guilty of breaking a relationship by living in these ways.

Being or doing the opposite can and will break relationships.

It is our choice.

Paul is saying “YOU have made your choice. Now be faithful to it.” Don’t be fooled into returning to the control of the “Old Man”. It ends in death. Following Jesus and His Spirit ends in Life.

Romans 8:6LB *Following after the Holy Spirit leads to life and peace, but following after the old nature leads to death.*

We will be tempted till death to do things the ‘old way’ or the way of ‘the flesh’. The fact that the choice will be there every hour of every day creates a HEALTHY TENSION. We can chose to honor our commitment, vows and promises and be faithful. This makes our love and relationship even stronger.

In **1 Thessalonians 5:19** Paul says “*Do not quench the Spirit.*”

How do we quench the Spirit? Quench means to throw water on something. You quench your thirst with water. You quench the fire with buckets of water. You quench the Spirit when the Spirit prompts you to do what is right or good but you reject it and “throw water on it”. You want to put that fire out or end those promptings. The Spirit can prompt us to do what is good and right through the Word, through someone elses encouragement, or even through an inner

prompting. It can be the smallest of things. God is always motivating us to do the good, the right and the best.

Sadly we often “throw water on it”. We can reject or ignore it. It can be a flash of an impulse, thought or idea that we can throw water on. We are putting out the Spirit’s fire in us. The flame is out. The relationship cools. We lose and suffer.

Nah, I don’t want to.

I don’t feel like it.

They don’t deserve it.

I’m too busy.

I’m tired.

Later.

Someone else can do it.

We are putting out the Spirit’s fire in us or His spark to create a fire of good passion and ministry for God.

Quenching the Holy Spirit is like a child rejecting the good word of encouragement of their parents, teachers, coaches or friends to do what is right, beneficial and good for them.

In **Ephesians 4:30** Paul calls us to *“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”*

We **QUENCH** the Holy Spirit when we reject a prompting of the Spirit to do something good or positive.

We **GRIEVE** the Holy Spirit of God when we **CHOOSE** to think, live and act in **WAYS THAT ARE CONTRARY TO GOD’S WAYS**. We already know much or most of what God really desires from us. When we act rebelliously and do things **“OUR WAY”** with no consideration as to how it is going to affect our relationship with God, we grieve Him. Why? Because he loves us and sees our actions as a lack of love and trust on our part. It is like our spitting on the sacrifice he made. “Ah, who cares?”

In quenching we choose to not something good.

In grieving we choose to do something wrong or bad.

I think that most all of the time when we sin, when we choose and act in ways that will damage our relationship with God, we do so KNOWING it is not God's will but we do it anyway. Now that has to hurt God! Paul even says that it grieves God.

Have you ever 'grieved' over someone rejecting your love for them? It hurts to the bone.

We don't know how we can go on having been rejected.

God feels grief too. It is all based on a trust relationship.

Thus Paul calls us to "live in the Spirit" and "walk in the Spirit". That is part of our commitment and our chosen way.

Let's not be foolish. We can trust Satan and go back to the old ways that caused us suffering and pain.

Oh yes, we can remember the 'pleasures and adventures' of the old ways and forget or overlook the emptiness and pain of that life. That is how Eve was fooled by Satan. He lied to her. He promised her things she would not get and he could not deliver.

What are we to do when we do believe the promises and calling of the old man and we fall in sin?

God has a safety net.

John tell us we need to go before God and confess our sins.

1 John 1:9 ⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Hebrews 4:16 *Let us then approach God's throne of grace with **confidence**, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

God is good. He is good with us. He wants the best for us. He also understands we are not perfect in all we do. With confession he provides us with a 'saftey net' for when we fall. We obviously don't want to take advantage of that and abuse it as if to say, "Ahhh, I know my mate will forgive me so I'll go and commit adultery again. What the heck."

But when we do fall God has a plan as to how to deal with it and keep the relationship strong and healthy. We need to confess our sin and repent, that is chose to think and act differently.

If we don't confess or acknowledge our sins but we continue pursuing our sin, God will discipline us. He loves us.

Hebrews 12:10 *They disciplined **us** for a little while as they thought best; but God **disciplines us** for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.*

Most often that means he will let us go our chosen way and suffer the natural consequences.

Natural consequences are a great teacher.

Do you remember Esau? You can read his story in Genesis 25. He sold his birthright (which represented all his privileges, benefits and promises for the future), he traded all the potential for many good things in life for something that he felt he had to have in the moment. And he lost.

Moses is a great model for us in choosing the right path and rejecting the damaging route.

Hebrews 11:24-26 *By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. ²⁵ He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶ He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. ²⁷ By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.*

Let's live in the wisdom of God, not the foolishness of Satan and his ways.

Remember, "IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIP." If we have THE relationship, we have it all.

*Philippians 3:⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the **surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that **I may gain Christ** ⁹ and **be found in him**, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ **I want to know Christ**—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, **becoming like him** in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*

*¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but **I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.** ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*

I would recommend that all read the book "GO AND SIN NO MORE" written by Dr. Michael Brown. You can order it on Amazon. It is excellent and challenges us in the area of living a holy life before God.