

Volume 5, Day 1: Secular or Sacred

In one scene of *Les Misérables* I found deep spiritual meaning. When an ex-convict who had been released from prison was invited into the Bishop's home for a meal and a good night's rest, conversation at the dinner table ensued. The criminal told the Bishop and his wife that he was imprisoned for 19 years for only having stolen a loaf of bread out of desperation to feed his hungry family. The bishop said to him, "Man can be unjust." The convict shot back, "Man not **God**?"

I can't count how many times I have blamed God for things not happening to me as they should, that is according to my way of thinking. Since watching that scene, I have gone back and repented of many accusations that I have made toward God which had nothing to do with Him. But the Bishop sets another tremendous spiritual idea before us in the next two scenes.

The convict arises in the night, loads the family silverware into his knapsack. When the Bishop catches him in the act, the convict knocks him out and runs away with the silver. In the morning the French law-enforcement guards bring the criminal back to the Bishop's residence with the stolen silverware. Surprisingly when the guard told the Bishop, "He said you gave it to him," the Bishop replied, "Yes." He then turned to the ex-con and asked, "Why didn't you take the silver candlesticks too, they're worth a lot of money?" In the background, the Bishop's wife muttered, "Thank God, You caught him!"

The revelation for me was that the Bishop acted in a loving manner like Jesus Christ. The Bishop's wife, acted like most Christians I know who are happier to get their material valuables back, even if it means the criminal goes back to prison for the rest of his life! The Bishop's final words to the ex-con were, "With this silver I have bought your soul ... Now, I give you back to God."

Consider this. It is the kindness of God that leads men to repentance onto salvation not his judgment. In John 3:17 Jesus said, "I didn't come to condemn the world but to save it! Look for the sacred in everything, good or bad, and you will see God everywhere!"

Find confirming scriptures and aligning experiences.

Volume 5, Day 2: Mercy Forgiveness Grace = Redemption

After watching the stolen silver scene in Les Miserables where the Bishop offered not just mercy and forgiveness but added grace (more silver), I decided to reread the whole Bible with sacred eyes. I have been a student of the word of God for decades. But rereading the entire Bible from the perspective of God's mercy, forgiveness and grace which are byproducts of his unconditional love for every human being, changed many of my misperceptions of God. My new perceptions changed my lifestyle as well.

I discovered that the Old Testament was not about judgment, condemnation and pure justice. It was about right living. I found in story after story, especially the sordid stories, that God's grace was at work. I began to see the entire Bible as the most amazing love story ever. Consider the stories of Job and Joseph who encountered enormous adversity and misery. Yet they knew and loved God in a deeply personal way. They didn't shake their fist at God in complaint, like I was so prone to do. They saw God at work promoting the glory of His love and participated with Him despite their own personal pain and misery. They were confident in God's purposes.

When God encountered the first murderer, Cain, He showed him mercy and actually withheld his due punishment. God even placed a mark of protection on Cain's forehead warning all that God would do seven times worse to them than they did toward Cain. It is not that God doesn't get angry about our evil and mean wrongs toward one another. It is that God made us to love us and that we would love God and each other. Just as we, who are not God, love even our wayward children, He loves all of His children, even the wayward ones.

Your parents may not have been good at all, but don't consider God as an **imperfect** parent such as human parents may be. By simply believing that God Himself, in the person of His Only Begotten Son, Jesus, paid the penalty for you. Forgiveness is simply letting God "pay it forward" (the penalty for your sin [crimes against relationship]) to Jesus.

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 3: Casting Condemnation (Blame)

Human nature is consistently self indulgent, self promoting and controlling. When others don't act in a manner that I consider to be appropriate, I will likely resort to all kinds of manipulation and coercion in order to get them to behave how I believe they should. The problem with this **god complex** is that even though I wouldn't claim to be God, I act as if I am! I've observed this in every human I have ever met. And it was confirmed in large measure while substitute teaching for three years and encountering over 5000 students, all of whom acted in this **self appointed god** manner. And I watched this create division and relational carnage everywhere I taught.

I encouraged the students to employ the golden rule in their lives as it could bring them more peace and harmony with others. But thanks to one 8th grade class, I was able to see a solution to a lot of the problems that I observed in the public school system. The golden rule is, "treat others the way you want to be treated." But most of us have never really thought clearly how it is that we want to be treated. In a single word we are all looking for is **acceptance**. Mostly we get rejection because we don't measure up to someone or everyone else's demands of us.

In the scene in Les Miserables where the Bishop actually lied to protect the criminal from re-incarceration we see the redemption of a criminal. Had the Bishop approached the criminal in the same manner as his wife, the rest of that man's life would have been wasted. In the end, the redemption was evident in the life redeemed by the Man of God. Jesus' method was, and still is, complete acceptance of any and all people, even in their most criminal behaviors. Jesus' acceptance of sinners actually incited the religious leaders of His church to anger great enough to crucify Him.

Accepting a person despite their wrongful behavior, does not condone their behavior. Condemnation belongs to God alone! Find your own literary or other creative work which will let you relate and apply this grace to others and change both yours and their life.

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day4: Fool me once. Shame on you!

My brother, Willie called me the other night asking me to loan him fifty dollars to get his car out of the repair shop. He knows that I am very clear with everyone asking for a hand out that I will not give money or stuff to them. He watched me flat out deny a man money just a couple of weeks ago.

Be aware, however, that sometimes the Holy Spirit tells me to write a huge check or pay for towing and repair for someone. Unless the Holy Spirit directs me to do anything, I will not do it. So in that context, my first inclination was to say “No.” to Willie. But the Spirit said to do it anyway. So with some skepticism, I agreed to meet Willie the next morning to loan him the money. As I drove to my next meeting, I texted his wife to let her know about the loan. Having received no reply, I met Willie and handed him the cash. He assured me that he would repay me in a couple of weeks.

Willie introduced me to his friend Dannie sitting on the bench beside him. As Dannie and I talked, I could tell that he was finding spiritual value in my words. I described how we don’t need to ask God for more faith. He gave us all at least a mustard seed amount of faith. Jesus said, “... if you have faith the size of a grain of mustard seed, you can command mountains to move and it will happen!” That small suggestion to seek to have the same faith as Abraham rather than asking God for more seemed to bring new understanding to Dannie.

As I left Willie, Deb’s response came through loud and clear. Willie has a gambling problem and **no responsibility** for auto repairs. I instantly realized that the transaction had nothing to do with Willie and everything to do about a divine appointment with Dannie! I refused to put shame on Willie and encouraged his wife later on the phone not to shame Willie, but release Him to God’s care and healing. She was moved to tears as we prayed for the “long-suffering” of God to be ours as we wait patiently for His Holy Spirit to heal Willie. Actually Willie’s deception produced two divine appointments. Instead of shaming others, I will release them from my condemnation to God’s love and grace which are truly healing.

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day5: Fool me twice. Shame on me!

“Yes, shame on me!” Not because I was too weak to resist or too foolish to recognize another’s manipulation. Rather, when I am fooled in either the first round or the second or subsequent rounds, it is a clear indication that I am not fully tuned in to the Holy Spirit within be.

John 16 declares that the role of the Holy Spirit is to convict men of sin, righteousness and judgment because they have not believed unto salvation. This chapter also reveals that the Holy Spirit’s role for believers is to guide us into all truth, including recognizing the motives of others.

Unfortunately, most Christians when others deceive them as to **why** they need help in order to get that help, they want to hold the other person responsible and will even try to shame the other party in order to get them to stop their manipulations. Yet, if we see clearly how Jesus treated the adulterous woman, for example, we find that Jesus did not heap shame on her. Rather He humiliated the religious, self-righteous for their hypocrisy. God is far more disgusted with self-righteous, boastful persons than one who sins and admits it and asks for forgiveness.

You likely remember that Jesus was not only beaten beyond recognition and nailed to a cross but also crucified naked. Jesus bore not only the penalty of our evil, but also suffered our shame. Therefore, as “Christ-ians” we should love like Jesus does, not blaming or shaming others into compliance with our standards for living, but showing them God’s grace so that they can be compelled by the love of God into a love affair with Him. And to be sure, the best solution to addictive behavior is developing a strong enough love for God that you are compelled not to hurt your **lover**!

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

human nature is:
self-indulgent
self-promoting
self-Sovereign

Volume 5, Day 6: Pursuit of Equity Brings Equilibrium

It is natural for humans to strive to achieve equity for all in their particular circles of influence. Yet equity seems to be nearly impossible to achieve regardless of how much intentionality and effort we put into its pursuit. Interestingly, equity is not the final answer. Its pursuit is simply one ingredient in global or universal equilibrium.

We tend to think that equity can and should be achieved. Yet we can see clearly that it has never occurred in any community over the centuries of mankind's existence on earth. Once we understand that the final answer is equilibrium, we can put equity in its proper perspective. The only time equity is fully realized is in the context of each person's value in relationship.

Physically, mentally and emotionally we cannot ever be equal. Each person's DNA (genetics) is unique. There are no two identical people. Even identical twins have myriad differences. There are no two snowflakes alike. There are no two blades of grass alike. The context in which equity exists is relationship. And every relationship is spiritual in nature. The spirit within a person actually chooses the values placed on all things in their sphere of influence. And only in the spiritual choice to place equal value on every relationship can equity be found.

Personal appearance, athleticism, acumen, intelligence, sensibility and attitude make value unique for each individual. Those with high IQs tend to have more lucrative careers than those with low IQs. Highly athletic persons might become Olympians while others could never be. Therefore equity in pay or social status cannot occur. However, in the context of relationship, all are of equal value to the creator. And although circumstances or vocational achievements will not be equal, our diversity creates an opportunity for equilibrium to be attained by virtue of harmony in relationship which comes through choice.

The ultimate choice is place equal value on everyone as together with them we create communities of the highest value. My personal equilibrium comes by my own choice to love all others.

Volume 5, Day 7: Equilibrium ~~or~~ Equity

“For every action there is an opposite and equal reaction.” “Opposites attract.” “Water seeks its level.” “Positive charges flow to the negative charges.” “What goes up, must come down.” “All sports are competitions.” “No pain, No gain.” Our greatest lesson are learned by failure. On and on we could spin. In short, All oppositions tend to bring equilibrium and balance.

We talk about the balance of nature. Rain and sunshine. Planting and harvesting. Daylight and darkness. Ebb and flow of tides. Water cycles. Death brings life. And so on. Even the tilt and rotation of the earth are necessary to sustain temperature and weather balance in order to support life. And beyond the atmosphere, the heavenly bodies with mass and energy bring equilibrium to earth and enable it to support human life. Then there is space and time. These participate in producing equilibrium by affecting phenomena at exactly the right time and place. Yet none of these natural forces are equal, but they are in balance, a very delicate and intricate balance.

As intelligent design would have it, no two forces are equal; no two individuals are equal; no two heavenly bodies are equal; no two molecules are equal; no two atoms are equal and so on. The most intelligent of all designs is that of mankind with the unique characteristic of spiritual connection with others in relationship. The creator is the most relational of all beings. And all humans, made in the image of God Himself have the opportunity and ability to create and sustain relationships. And, to be sure, with an up-close-and-personal relationship with God, humans can develop other-caring relationships that truly transcend each one’s tendency to be selfish enough to takes advantage of others for personal benefit.

Equilibrium and equity is achieved when love is so strong for another that selfless abandon occurs. God’s Spirit, when embraced and received into one’s bosom, enables otherwise selfish beings to live and love for the benefit of others!

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 8: Control Spawns Conflict

The objective of God in both creating mankind and enabling us to procreate generation after generation is to expand (exponentially) the number of beings who can love like God such that the 3 persons in the trinity can share their immense love with billions of beings instead of just three.

The reason most Christians remain infantile, while being puffed-up about what they think is their "Christian maturity," is their resistance to change and insistence on control. Neither resistance nor control can in any way assist the process of surrender. Particularly in relationship these two things guarantee that relationship cannot be sustained. These two things are the bedrock of all quarrels, conflicts and, on a larger scale, wars!

When and only when we have developed a furious love affair with God (Jesus) will we resonate with change rather than resist change. In the state of honeymoon love with God we actually embrace change and anticipate it, as it is the very essence of relationship and the spice of life. In God and God alone can you ever be at peace in the middle of every storm, find good in every bad, find healing in every harm, find magnificence in every mundane and have a reason to pray for blessing even for your enemies.

When we forget that "God allows in His wisdom what He could easily prevent by His power," we try to take control out of God's hands and make the misery "go away." Unless and until we trust God's heart completely, we will continue to destroy the very thing we want most, "being loved and accepted, **as-is**, without changes to our personality or behavior."

The peace of God is wrapped in my release of my control over my life and the lives of others! Just let God be perfectly trusted!

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 9: Significance of Perceptions about God

The seeming contradiction of James' words that "justification comes by works" is that we have misunderstood what James was trying to communicate. (Even Martin Luther argued against the Book of James being included in the canon of scripture over this misunderstanding on Luther's part.) James is all about relationship. James, the man, was the brother of Jesus and failed to recognize Jesus as God until after the resurrection. The Greek language more accurately interpreted is that, if "proclaimed" faith does not have the resulting actions of that faith, it is useless. It also implies that even works, that may look like they are produced by faith, can be counterfeit acts as they are empty of the love which would autonomically produce them. In other words, as the Apostle Paul states clearly in 1 Corinthians 13, magnificent words and works in the absence of love are useless.

Our misperceptions of God have stunted our Christian growth. Allowing God to correct the misperceptions is neither a threat to faith nor denomination. The truth will simply set you free from guilt, shame and fear that Jesus took with Him onto the cross for us. Allowing the "unconditional" love of God to permeate your soul is the only solution to the sin problem after Salvation. "The greatest deterrent to wrong-full behavior is an incredible affection for the one I might otherwise do wrong." — J H Alan

To experience the peace of God in all things consider James' words: "Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way." — James 1:2-4 MSG

True surrender is only achieved when control is released to another trustworthy person to handle the situation in the best possible way. Isn't God that trustworthy other.

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 10: Do You Have Trouble Forgiving?

There are several reasons for which you prefer not to forgive those who have used, misused or abused you. Perhaps you believe that your forgiveness condones their behavior. Possibly you believe that your forgiveness gives them permission to do it again. Maybe you think that forgiving them will put others at risk of their evil intentions. You might even want them to suffer more than they have made you or others suffer. All of these thoughts are as normal as breathing! Yet Scripture declares prolifically the benefit of forgiveness.

Consider for a moment just how much you might, in ways you do not recognize, have behaved from time to time in the same evil manner. Consider that even God Himself is willing to forgive any and all who will confess their criminality before Him for His absolution. And consider the final moments of Jesus' crucifixion. While His accusers jeered at Him from the foot of the cross, He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing." Could it be that you think that you are more deserving of forgiveness than your perpetrators? And is it possible that they (and you) did not realize what they were doing when they committed crimes against others?

Maybe it would help if you looked at the Gospel in this manner. The Gospel is the essence of God's **paying forward** the punishment for your sin (evil against others) to Jesus to accommodate both justice and mercy for all spawned by love. If the Gospel is about grace, it is about a love so unconditional toward you that you not only do not suffer the punishment you deserve, but also you are granted an inexhaustible number of second chances.

So, ask God to dispense to your starving soul the nutrients needed in order for you to desire the same grace you received to be granted to your fellow man. The Gospel does not remove the consequences of sin (relationship crimes), it simply provides a means by which the full punishment for all of our crimes have been served. And only God, in the person of Jesus, can do that!

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 11: Right Information, Right Timing

We often get information or revelation and can't wait to share it with others. Many times this is due to our desire to help others know more truth or to become more successful in some pursuit. And when it comes to pursuits, most of our human pursuits fail to have any value from an eternal perspective. And often we are happy to have helped another, while the truth is that we only thought that we have helped them. But our own perception in this regard is the only thing that matters. And, to be sure, in all of life reality is only, ever and always what we perceive it to be. Further, much of what we do believe to be true is largely determined by what we want to be true. We even surround ourselves with others whose perceptions of truth are most like our own.

We congregate in groups, communities, and nations based on what culture we have mutually defined and developed in these groups. This is true of political ideologies, religious beliefs, philosophies, morality and many other human persuasions. Our idea of helping others is that we convince them to believe as we do and subscribe to the same values as we do. And in this pursuit, we use every device we can in order to affect these changes in others. And this is why 'helping' is often 'hindering.'

Now it may be that what you believe would be helpful for others as well. And to be sure, it is likely better to share the gems of wisdom and knowledge rather than to keep them to ourselves. However, there are many ways and means to express these gems to others. And we usually try to do so in the most conducive places and times to affect the desired change in others. That only makes sense. And you have likely seen this backfire on occasion. So, here is an important fact which may help you achieve the best helping possible.

"The finest information delivered at the wrong time might well be the most toxic and harmful to the recipient." – J H Alan
Better to say nothing at all than to inflict harm to others.

My Confirming Scriptures and Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 12: Transparency and Concentration on the Love of God

The outstanding characteristic of a Christian is honest vulnerability before God and all others. Our transparency enables others to see God's marvelous work in our lives. When the love of God that transforms us makes God's love obvious to others, it is as though that life becomes a mirror for others to see the reflection of God. Being filled with the Spirit we are transformed as He changes our thoughts of God. The look of love on our faces as we gaze upon God, acts as a mirror. You always know when a man has been admiring the glory of the Lord. You feel in your inner spirit that he is the mirror of the Lord's own loving character.

The golden rule for your life and mine is this concentration on the love of God and His purposes for every aspect of our lives. Let everything else - work, clothes, food, everything on earth - go by the board, except for that one thing. The rush of other things always tends to break this concentration on God. We have to maintain our focus on Him in order to see everything in our life as absolutely spiritual. Let other things come and go as they may. Let other people criticize as they will. But never allow anything to distract you from awareness of Him. This is the life that is hid with Christ in God.

Never be hurried. Simply maintain the relationship by abiding in Him. It is the one thing that is apt to fluctuate. But don't go there. The most difficult thing in a Christian's life is to learn how to keep "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." Beware of anything which would smudge or distort that mirror in you. It is nearly always a good thing that is the enemy of the best. Stick to the best and others will see God!

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 13: No Goals, Only Pursuit of God's Vision

The vision Paul had on the road to Damascus was not a passing emotion. The vision had very clearly defined directions for him. Paul said, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Our Lord said, in effect, to Paul, "Your whole life is to be guided by Me and submitted to my orders. You are to have no goals, no destinations and no purposes but Mine. "I have chosen you." Now that you have chosen Me, your life is mine!

When we are born again we all have imaginations and expectations of what God wants us to be. The greatest thing is not to be disobedient to the God's actual vision for our lives. It is inappropriate to say that it cannot be attained. That would be declaring that God cannot bring us to love Him enough to be submitted entirely to Him. It is not sufficient to know that the Holy Spirit can make all that Jesus did effective in me. I must have a deeply personal and passionate relationship with Him.

Paul was not given a message or doctrines to proclaim. Neither were we. He was brought into a vivid, personal, passionate, devotion to Jesus Christ. Relationship with God is nothing if it isn't 'head over heels' affection for God. God disrupted Paul's life in order "to make him a minister and a witness." There is nothing in either of these apart from the personal relationship established with God. Paul was devoted to a Person not to a cause. He was absolutely Jesus Christ's. He saw nothing else. He lived for nothing else. "For I determined not to know anything among you, except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

We were made to be lovers of God. He made such a relationship with Himself possible for every person. He wants nothing less than to be our most significant other "... on earth as He is in heaven."

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 14: Make Room for God

As **workers for God** we have to learn to **make room for God**. We need to give God "elbow room." We try to figure out how to handle each situation we face. We forget to make room for God to intervene and manage the situation as He sees fit. Would we be surprised if God barged into our meeting or disrupted our teaching in a way that embarrassed us? Do we expect God to come in any particular way? Rest assured, He will appear at times without warning. The way to **make room for Him** is to expect Him to show up. Don't expect Him to come in only a certain way. However much we may know God, we cannot predict how He will enter the situation.

We tend to overlook this element of surprise. Yet God never works in any other way. All of a sudden God meets the life. "**When** it was the good pleasure of God. . ." Constantly anticipate God's appearing in ways you don't expect. Always be in a state of expectancy. Leave room for God to come in however He pleases. Spontaneity is one of the most enjoyed aspects of great relationships. This is true of relationships with people and with God. You can always expect to feel outrageously loved by God. But you can't ever predict His expressions of that love.

It is important as well to **make room for God** even in the busiest and noisiest of times. When we fail to make room for God (that is, simply to be aware of His presence), we may not see Him when He suddenly appears. Or we may know He came, but not realize what He accomplished in His visitation. Take your quiet time with God out into the din. Everything will take on a glorious and palpable feeling of love, joy and peace. **You will never be anxious while you are abandoned to His will in the moment of decision.**

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 15: Simple But Profoundly Difficult

A **simple** statement of Jesus will always puzzle us if we do not receive it as **simple**. How can we be simple with the simplicity of Jesus? By receiving His Spirit, recognizing and relying on His Spirit and obeying Him immediately as He brings the word of God to us. Life will become amazingly simple when we trust God as simply as children trust their parents. Children assume that what the parents do is normal, even if it is not. "Consider," says Jesus, "how much more your Father Who clothes the grass of the field will clothe you." You never have to be concerned about life sustaining provisions.

The spiritual application of Jesus question is that you can trust God in relationship to always be trustworthy. Every relationship hinges on trust. Every time we have stepped out of communion with God has been because we have impertinently known better than Jesus Christ what is best. We have allowed the cares of the world (everything outside of our relationship with God) to come between us. We have essentially forgotten how much better we feel when we are up close and personal with Him.

Jesus says that if you are rightly related to Him and obey His Spirit that is in you, God will look after everything else. If we simply do what God requests, He will look after all the other things we need and provide them. How much time have we spent worrying God with questions when we should have been absolutely free to **simply do what He asks**? The greatest gift I can give my spouse is my time, attention and affection. I have separated myself from others in order to dwell with my spouse. Do you continually separate yourself to consider God in every decision you make?

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 16: Obsessed with Self and Common Sense?

A warning which needs to be reiterated is that the cares of this world (the **things that affect our reputation**), the deceitfulness of riches (the **financial, medical and material** possessions), and the lust of other things (the desire to be **in control or in charge** of others) having a high priority, will choke all that God puts in. God only puts into us **love** which is the basis for all relationships. It is these things that draw us away from relationships of all kinds.

We are never free from the desires of the flesh, **prosperity, popularity and power**. These things come and go in recurring tides and often drown the very thing we want most, to love and to be loved (healthy relationships). If it isn't about clothes, shelter and food, it will be about money or friends or lack of them, or it will be about difficult circumstances or aggravating people. It is one steady barrage all the time. Unless we allow the Spirit of God to take charge of our life, the floods will overwhelm us.

"Take no thought for your life." "Be careful about one thing only," says Jesus, "your relationship to Me." Common sense shouts loud and says, "That is absurd. I must consider how I am going to live. I must consider what I am going to eat and drink." Jesus says that you must not. Don't think for a minute that it's easy for Jesus to say because He is God and we're not. The One Who **is** God, Jesus Christ, knows us and our circumstances better than we do. We are to "...cast all our cares upon Him!"

How much evil has tempted you today? How many times does your mind wander into thinking, "What am I going to do next month or this summer?" "Be anxious for nothing," Jesus says. If your desire is to do His will and not yours, it takes no effort or thought!

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 17: My Way Persecutes Jesus

Am I determined to do things **my own** way for God? We are never free from this tendency until we are completely surrendered in love and absolute trust of the Holy Spirit within us. Obstinacy and self-will always stab the heart of Jesus. It may hurt no one else, but it wounds His Spirit. Whenever we are affected by our own ambitions, we will be hurting Jesus. Every time we insist on exercising our rights or achieving our own results, we are persecuting Jesus. Whenever we defend our dignity, we grieve His Spirit. And when we realize that it is Jesus Whom we have been persecuting all the time, it is the most crushing revelation to our ego.

Is the word of God tremendously seen in me as I pass it on to you, or does my lifestyle betray me and reveal that I do not live according to the things I profess to believe? I may teach doctrines of scripture or moral character and yet express rejection or hatred (the spirit of Satan). The Spirit of Jesus is conscious of one thing only - perfect emotional and relational unity with the Father. Jesus says, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." All I do should be motivated by genuine affection of the most intimate kind. Unconditional love will automatically produce grace (**undeserved** favor). When I am in perfect unity with God, I will "**love like Jesus loves.**"

When my unity with Jesus initiates every expression I make (words, deeds, body language or facial expressions), I can be made a laughing stock, manipulated, coerced or ignored without retaliation. This is what it means to be crucified with Christ, being persecuted like Him. However, my self-willed determination to look like I am godly reveals my contempt for Jesus and the work of the Cross.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 18: My Own Convictions or God's

"The Lord spoke thus to me with a strong hand." There is no mistaking when Our Lord speaks. He always brings correction to the understanding. Have you heard the voice of God directly? If so, you cannot mistake the intimate insistence with which it entered your soul. He has spoken to you in the language you know best, not through your ears, but through your circumstances.

God must destroy our determined confidence in our own convictions - "I know this is what I should do." Suddenly the voice of God speaks in a way that overwhelms us by revealing the depths of our ignorance and selfishness. We have shown our ignorance of Him in the very way we determined to serve Him. We serve Jesus in a spirit that is not His. We insult Him when we try to defend His honor. It's almost as though we think that we have more credibility than He does. How foolish! Our words may sound right, but our spirit is that of an enemy of God. He rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of." The Spirit of our Lord, in an advocate of His, is described in 1 Corinthians 13 (the essence of love personified).

Have I been making a mockery of Jesus by a zealous determination to serve Him **in my own way**? If I feel I have done my duty and yet have hurt Him in doing it, I may be sure it was not my duty, because it has not fostered the meek and quiet spirit, but the spirit of self-satisfaction. We imagine that whatever is unpleasant is our duty! Is that anything like the spirit of our Lord - "I delight to do Thy will, O my God."

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 19: Look for God's Purpose in Every Circumstance

God seldom speaks to us in a clear, booming voice, but in ways that are easy to misunderstand. We say, "I wonder if that is God's voice?" Isaiah said that the Lord spoke to him "with a strong hand," that is, by the pressure of circumstances. Nothing touches our lives for any purpose other than God Himself speaking. Do we realize that it is His plan or do we think it is only mere coincidence?

Say as often as possible, "Speak, Lord," and life will become a romance with God. Every time circumstances put pressure on you, say, "I'm listening, Lord". Make time to listen. Better yet, never stop listening! Chastening is more than a means of discipline, it is meant to get me to the place of saying, "What does this mean and what do You want me to do, Lord." Recall a time when you clearly heard God speak to you. Have you forgotten what He said? As we listen, our ear gets more acute, and, like Jesus, we will hear God all the time.

Shall I tell my mentor what God has shown to me? That is the greatest dilemma. When my obedience to God requires that I confront my own spiritual mentor, it creates a great dilemma. If I think that I should not offend my mentor and refuse to obey God to that end, it will prove to be an obstruction between my soul and God. When I disobey God so that I do not offend the most influential people I know, I grieve Him.

God's call to you may hurt your pastor, teacher or mentor, but if you try to prevent the suffering in another life, it will prove an obstruction for both you and the ones you try to protect from suffering. Never ask the advice of another about anything God makes you decide before Him. If you ask advice, you will nearly always side with your counselor. "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 20: Communicating the Gospel of God

Our calling is not primarily to be men and women living out the love of Jesus (loving all others without any conditions on their behavior or attitudes), but to be proclaimers of the Gospel of God. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God – the Gospel. The Gospel of God is about a sweet, loving awareness of the presence of God within. The evidence of our salvation is not human goodness, nor holiness, nor heaven, nor hell. It is our true affection for God because of our redemption from the penalty of sin. When we commit sin, our response should always be giving thanks for the forgiveness that has already been applied. It is this forgiveness which we receive which enables us to forgive all others. Redemption is the only Reality. If we place our faith in human goodness (the effect of Redemption) we will sin more, not less. **Personal holiness is an effect, not a cause.**

Paul did not say he separated himself, but - "when it pleased God who separated me ...". Paul had no interest in his own character. As long as we are focused on our personal righteous expressions, we can't experience the reality of Redemption. We get exhausted when we try to live righteously rather than abandoned to God for His use. When I strive to behave well and force other to do so, all I want is anything God can do **for** me to improve **my** reputation with people. Living like this is proof that the Gospel of God has not begun to touch me; there is no reckless abandon to God. God cannot use me while my interest is merely in my own character. Paul is unconscious of himself. He is recklessly abandoned, separated by God for one purpose - to proclaim the Gospel of God (cf. Rom. 9:3). The Gospel is not about 'self' righteousness. It is about the righteousness of God which I received by grace through faith in Jesus not of works.

Beware of thinking that the acts of kindness of the love of God are a silent witness of the Gospel. The Gospel must be expressed in words. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." -- Confirming Scriptures - Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 21: Declared 'HOLY' and Set Apart by God.

The call of God for all Christians is to preach the gospel. But remember what "the gospel" is. It is Redemption by grace through faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Redemption is having the consequences of our sins (all of them) paid by Jesus Christ. Unfortunately we often think of the Gospel as sanctification, which is: **being set apart for God's purposes with His declaration that we are Holy because our faith (not our works) has made us so.** The purpose of redemption is to know God in personal experience. The "gospel" is the acceptance of God's offer of a personal relationship with Himself which comes by faith in Jesus Christ.

Our testimony of redemption is that our desires become like God's. That is, we desire that "none should perish but that all should come to repentance." Repentance is not groveling in guilt, shame and fear for our wrong doing. It is **turning from** living apart from God and **turning to** living in a vibrant, intimate personal relationship with Him. True redemption (salvation) is demonstrated by dispensing the unconditional love of God to all people. In other words, it is to "Love Like Jesus (God) Loves." Only the Holy Spirit within us can do this. The essential requirement in establishing this personal relationship with God is the declaration of belief that Jesus is God Himself manifest in the flesh on earth.

It would be a shame to say that Jesus Christ suffered the anguish of the Cross just to make me a saint. The one passion of a true Christian is to proclaim the Gospel of God so that others can experience redemption. We can welcome heartbreaks, disappointments, hardships, and ruin when, and only when, we are abandoned to God because of our love for God and love for the Gospel of God.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 22: Redeemed and Called — but Are You a Disciple?

Be careful not to dismiss the call of God to you. Everyone who is saved is called to testify to the changes God affected in you when you were saved. But preaching is not limited to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Preaching is 'to express your affection for anyone or anything in your life. Preaching the Gospel is only one illustration of preaching. You will find yourself preaching all the time about one thing or another that has great meaning for you. It could be to speak proudly about someone you love. It could be to speak passionately about some charitable activity you find personally fulfilling.

Paul is referring in this verse to the pain he would feel if he failed to 'preach' the Gospel which affect was to radically transform him from the inside out. Paul's motives became those of the One who saved him from himself. However, do not apply what Paul says in this connection to souls coming in contact with God for salvation. Paul's words have to do with becoming so overwhelmed by love for Jesus that he wants to be nothing other than a servant of Jesus. And as servants our permission is never asked as to what we will do or where we will go.

God makes us broken bread and poured-out wine to please Himself. To be "separated unto the gospel" means to hear the call of God and be so deeply affected by it that every ambition is nipped in the bud, every desire of self-life quenched, every outlook completely extinguished and blotted out, except for that one thing only - "separated unto the gospel." The soul who tries to go in any other direction when once that call has come to him, will be thoroughly miserable.

We are condemned to salvation through the Cross of Jesus Christ. Discipleship has an option with it - "**If** any man. . ."

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 23: Concerned About My Reputation or His Purposes

"We are made as the filth of the world." 1 Corinthians 4:9-13

These words are not an exaggeration. The reason they are not true of us who call ourselves 'Christians' is not that Paul failed to understand how true they are. He did recognize that we have too many concerns about how people think of us. We are all but **obsessed with the reputation** we have with those around us. We want to be respected, admired and likely even emulated. The last thing we want people to consider us is trash in the dump. "Filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ," that is the 'criminal' image of His crucifixion. These afflictions are not evidence of being a 'Christian.' The evidence is simply living your life solely for the purpose of God in salvation. It is being "**separated** unto the gospel."

"Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you," says Peter. Yet many 'Christians' pray away these very trials which are intended by God to help us become mature in faith. We have a definite aversion to adversity. We also simply refuse to accept it as a **blessing from God**, the **evidence of our love for God** and **in His purposes for our lives**.

You can be saved by the skin of your teeth if you like. You can refuse to let God count you as one 'separated unto the gospel.' Or you can side with Jesus against the mainstream of humanity. When we are truly intimately passionate with God, we will not care that we are treated as the scum of the earth as long as the Gospel is proclaimed. A true servant of Jesus Christ is one who is willing to go all the way to their own death in order to promote the 'Kingdom of God. This is the reality of the gospel of God. The marvel of the Redemptive Reality of God is that the worst and the vilest person can never extinguish or even thwart His love for them.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 24: Concerned About Me or Possessed by Love for God?

"For the love of Christ constrains us." -- 2 Corinthians 5:14

Paul says he is overruled, overmastered, held as in a vice, by the love of Christ. Very few of us know what it means to be held in a grip by the love of God. We are completely blinded to the love of God because we are so overwhelmed and focused on our personal experiences only. The one thing that held Paul's attention, until there was nothing else on his mind, was the enormous, captivating love of God. "The love of Christ constrains us." When you feel that depth of love and caring in a person, you can never mistake it. You know that the Spirit of God is unhindered by the self-life.

When we are born again of the Spirit of God, the testimony is the transformed motivations within us. But our witness unto Jesus Christ overshadows that. We begin to realize what Jesus meant when He said - "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me." Not witnesses to what Jesus can do. We will take everything that happens as happening to Him, whether it be praise or blame, persecution or commendation. When and only when, it is no longer about my reputation, can I be true to Jesus Christ in all things. No one can stand with Jesus Christ who is not overwhelmed by the enormity of His unconditional love.

This is the only thing that matters in the Christian life. The strange thing is that it is the last thing actualized in a Christian. Paul says he is gripped by the love of God. Men may call him mad or sober, but he does not care. There is only one thing he is living for, and that is to persuade men of sin, righteousness, judgment seat of God, and of the love of Christ. Abandon to the love of God is the one thing that bears fruit in the life, and it will always leave the impression of the holiness and of the power of God, never of our personal holiness.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 25: Anonymity or Recognition

"Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all." Philippians 2:17

If you do some great thing for God and someone else gets credit for it, are you okay with that? Are you willing to be overlooked or completely ignored while working hard to promote the kingdom of God? Are you willing to pour out your life, that is, to have absolutely no personal agenda or gain, in order to promote faith in others?

Or are you more likely to say, "I am not going to be invisible or anonymous just yet. I want God to endorse my ministry and make it thrive. I want to follow my own vision of ministry for God and choose the scenario of my own sacrifice. I want to have the right kind of people watching and saying, 'Well done.'"

It is one thing to pursue dignified heroism for God. It is quite another thing, if the ministry God has planned for you results in you being a door-mat under other people's feet. Suppose God wants to teach you to say, "I know how to be abased." Are you okay with that? Are you willing to be so hopelessly insignificant that most people don't even see you? Are you okay with never being thought of in connection with the life you lived for God? Are you willing to spend yourself and be used or abused by others, not seeking to receive ministry from others, but to only minister to others?

Some saints cannot do menial work because it is beneath their dignity. But is there anything you will not do for your most significant other on earth? A reality check here is to analyze your motives for service altogether. If it has any self glory in it, it is not God's work at all. If it is done for your own glory it will be consumed by fire in the presence of God. If it is for God's glory alone, it will endure forever.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 26: Prayer Always Has an Answer, but Will I Accept It?

Every fact that the disciples stated was right; but the conclusions they derived from those facts were wrong. Anything that causes me to feel dejection spiritually is always wrong. If depression or oppression come over me, I am to blame. God is not. Nor is anyone else. Dejection springs from one of two sources - I have either satisfied a lust or I have not. Lust means - I must have it right now, without having to wait for it. Spiritual lust makes me demand an answer from God, and to have it right now.

If I am seeking God Who gives the answer, I will be fine with not only His answer, but also His timing. Actually, God answers every prayer. Sometimes His answer is 'yes.' Sometimes it is 'no.' Other times it is 'later.' Instead of asking God for specific results, you might ask Him to divulge His wisdom in bringing the situation into your life since His power is sufficient to have prevented it in the first place.

What have I been trusting God to do? And today - the immediate present - is the third day, and He has not done it. Therefore I think that I am justified in being dejected and in blaming God for withholding information or results.

Whenever the insistence is on the point that God answers prayer, we are thinking wrongly. The meaning of prayer is that we understand the heart and mind of God and cooperate fully with His purposes in every experience of life. Dejection spiritually is wrong, and we are always to blame for it. Dejection results from an expectation of God which is not consistent with His purposes.

We look for visions from heaven, for earthquakes and thunders of God's power and we never imagine that all the time God is in the commonplace things and people around us.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 27: Willing to Pay the Cost of Surrender?

Do we even understand the implications of being sanctified? Paul included the word **wholly**, that is, completely. Although you may think of being sanctified as the process of becoming more like Christ, it is rather in instantaneous effect of a definite, whole-hearted commitment. Sanctification from God's point of view is these two things. We are **set apart** for His use. And we are **declared** to be fully righteous as was His Son, Jesus. Neither of these things are gradual. It may take us a long time to come to the point of crisis wherein we take the leap and say, "I'm all in!"

Are you prepared for what full surrender to God's sanctification will cost you? It will require an intense narrowing of all your interests and an enormous attention to the purposes of God. It requires every power of your body, soul and spirit expended to accomplish God's purposes. Are you prepared for God to do in you all that He separated you for? Are you prepared to separate yourself to God even as Jesus did? Are you willing, **for the sake of others**, to be fully surrendered to God's purposes and plans?

The reason many of us have not entered into the experience of sanctification is that we have not realized and accepted the meaning of sanctification from God's point of view. It means being made one with Jesus so that the motives that inspired Him will be the same motives that inspire us. Are we prepared for what that will cost? It will cost us everything that is not of God in our lives.

The one and only characteristic of the Holy Spirit in a man is a strong family likeness to Jesus Christ, and freedom from everything that is unlike Him. Are you willing to be as radically different from all others as Jesus was?

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 28: Spiritual Exhaustion Is My Fault

Spiritual exhaustion is not caused by sin. It is caused by service for God which is accomplished by my own efforts. If you are tired and worn out by your ministry to others, it might help to consider this. Jesus said that, “my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” So my exhaustion may be the result of me trying to do what Jesus has offered to do for me. My supply of resources and energy can quickly be depleted. However, God’s resources and energy are inexhaustible. So if you are exhausted in any respect, consider letting the Holy Spirit do the work. Jesus’ words, “Come to me and I will give you rest,” mean exactly this. Come to Jesus. Get in His yoke. Let Him do the pulling.

God uses us as a conduit or connector to help weary and worn people to receive His supplies. God does not intend for you to provide the supplies. God simply wants to use you as His supply chain for them. As you do this, you can also help them find their way into Jesus’ yoke and no longer be needed to assist. It may appear for a time that you are the one providing the supplies. But since you have poured yourself out in surrender to God’s sanctification, it can only be God’s own supplies that are finding their way into these weary lives. You get to serve up the nourishment for other souls until they learn to feed on God directly. They will drain you to the dregs. Be certain that you remain only a supply line of God’s resources, or before long you will be utterly exhausted.

Until other souls learn to draw on the life of the Lord Jesus directly, they have will draw on it through you. Even though they might actually drain you dry, they will receive from God through you whatever they need to grow and thrive.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 29: What Compelled Me to Ministry?

Has the way in which you have been serving God resulted in exhaustion? If so, then consider how your own compassion may have instigated the ministry. Ask yourself, "Where did I get the idea to start the service from? Was it from your own sympathy or from the expressed purposes of God which is essentially the basis of the Redemption of Jesus Christ?" Continually go back to the foundation of your affections and recall where the source of power is. You have no right to say, "O Lord, I am so exhausted." He saved and sanctified you in order to empty you of your own efforts and resources, that is, to exhaust you. Be exhausted for God, but remember that your supply comes from Him. "All my fresh springs shall be in Thee."

Because I have listened definitely to one thing from God, it does not follow that I will listen to everything He says. The way in which I show God that I neither love nor respect Him is by the obtuseness of my heart and mind towards what He says. If I love my friend, I intuitively detect what he wants, and Jesus says, "Ye are My friends." Have I disobeyed some command of my Lord's this week? If I had realized that it was a command of Jesus, I would not consciously have disobeyed it; but most of us show such disrespect to God that we do not even hear what He says, He might as well never have spoken.

The destiny of my spiritual life is such intimacy with Jesus Christ that I always hear God, and I know that God always hears me (John 11:41). If I am united with Jesus Christ, I hear God. A flower, tree, donkey or a servant of God, may convey God's message to me. What keeps me from hearing is that I am distracted by other things. It is that I am devoted to things, service, people or convictions that I do not hear Him. The child-like attitude is always, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant hears." If I have not cultivated this devotion of hearing, I can only hear God's voice at certain times; at other times I am distracted by things - things which I say I must do, and I become deaf to Him, I am not coming to God as a child. LISTEN! You might hear God speaking right now.

My Confirming Scriptures & Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 30: Overcoming the World

"...we are more than **conquerors** through Him that loved us."

Romans 8:37 And in Luke 4:10 Psalm 91:11 the Bible says,
"... He shall give His angels charge over you to **keep** you."

We often gravitate to the victory lap after the race. We even brag about victory before it occurs in reality. We sometime do so because we believe that the scriptures we just read mean that we can and will be victorious. We also consider ourselves to be safe from harm and misery at being in the keeping of the "Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ." Yet, we at the same time spew out our complaints when we do suffer. We blame Satan or evil spirits or other people for our misery in the situation we find ourselves. And, to be honest, we sometimes think that God has failed to fulfill His Promise Keeping!"

Now James writes in his epistle, that we should, "Consider it all joy when we encounter various trials..." Then he continues with the explanation of this outrageous statement! Trials serve an essential purpose for every person. The maturing or curing process takes time. It usually produces pressure and heat for the object being perfected for its intended use. Yet we want to have the benefits of maturity without the necessary steps to becoming mature.

We are more than conquerors. How can you be more than victorious? We are kept, but not from adversity and trials. So why does the Bible proclaim these things. We to be sure, it might seem like God sometimes fails us. And many of us believe that. But if we keep in proper perspective the meaning of victory from God's point of view, we can see clearly that He never fails us. He is always trust worthy.

What God offers us is victory over our worldly, selfish complaining about maladies and miseries. He enables us to face every trial as an opportunity to be victorious over our natural responses or reactions to negative experiences. Our testimony is as Jesus told His disciples at their last supper together, "...by this will all men know that you are My disciples, that you love one another as much as My Father and I have loved you!"

My Confirming Scriptures: Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5, Day 31: God Is Sincerely Right About Faith

You cannot be wrong, sincerely enough, to be right! --
John Henry Alan

My brother sent this personal experience of sincerity:

I received your text message on November 24th, and I have kept it available to think about what I would like to reply. This became a very serious topic for me when I was studying at Wayne State University in Detroit. This was the first time I remember encountering people with different beliefs, like Buddhism, Islam, and Hinduism. As I considered why each of us held our beliefs sincerely, I recognized that I sincerely believed in Christianity and the Bible because I had grown up in this religion and all of those around me believed it.

I began to wonder if maybe all of those others around me sincerely believed what they did for the same reasons. Maybe all of us held to our beliefs sincerely because our predecessors had done so. Then the question became - how far back in our ancestry did the belief originate, and was it real or fabricated. It was at that time that God caused me to consider seminary seriously.

As I studied each of the belief systems and their origins, I recognized that only Christianity had real foundation in actual historical events. Each of the other religions had risen out of human reasoning or "so-called, divine revelation"; each of which may be flawed. As I recognized the flaws of these other religions and the flawlessness of the 66 documents of the Bible, I was able to commit myself to the God of the Bible and His Son.

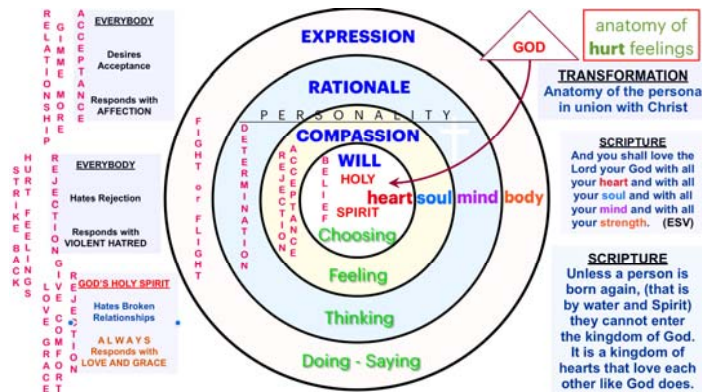
The miracle that God did at the Detroit Rescue Mission back in 1984 gave me absolute confirmation of my belief, as my faith became sight. A man in the audience insisted that I pray for his healing. He was sure I could do it. Because of his insistence and only that, I prayed that God would heal this man's badly deformed shoulder. I was shocked into incredible faith by healing affected by this man's faith and not my own.

My Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

Volume 5 – Anatomy of hurt feelings

Do you have your daily devotions as hurriedly as the rest of your daily duties? Why not do it slow, relaxed and deep? Think about it!



Being unaware of our own personal inability to love our enemies, it behooves us to tap into the Spirit of God (Holy Spirit) to **love others in ways we can never achieve** without His love and power posited within us. One purpose of the Holy Spirit being in us is that He loves like Jesus loves. Without the ‘second’ birth (Spirit of God birth) the best we can hope for is not to do anything criminal toward those who hurt us on purpose. The natural of humans is that we can easily love those who love us. It is just as natural to resent those who resent us. But when God’s Holy Spirit indwells us He can, and does, show love and respect to even our enemies. And this is quite natural for God. He loves every person into whom He has breathed life. Many of us also tend to feel this, “Love me. Love my children.”