

This Blog posting is in chronological order and spans: 2001-2008

Dealing With One's Anger:

When dealing with anger in healthy ways I now realize that there are more options than I had first guessed. First of all it is okay to be angry, and we won't always be able to deal with it as quickly as it comes up. To forget about it without dealing with it eventually means we have let the sun go down on our anger. We might be angry for days, weeks, or even months... but even though the sun has set each day... it has not set on our anger if we still feel it because the anger is still visible to us. One thing we can do is visually package our anger and put it in Jesus' hands until there is a better time to deal with it. When we have better perspective, or more distance between it and us. Some people are quicker at dealing with their anger than others, but I know for myself that I am either too slow to recognize my anger or are overwhelmed with my anger because it is too intense and so often the first things I do with it are foolish. For me, dealing with my anger is a process based on what I have learned from the Body of Christ and being open to the Holy Spirit's guidance in the past and in the present.

Insight:

Forgiving oneself for letting others cross one's boundaries might first be required before it will be easier to forgive those who crossed our boundaries.

Further Progress:

Gradually I would be led by the Holy Spirit to a cycle: conviction of sin, confession of sin, repentance from sin, relief, and then conviction again of more sins, more confessions, and so on... God used this cycle to clean me His temple. The most significant of which are the following:

Insight:

True spirituality always puts God first – there is no promotion of self in God's Kingdom. Moving from depending more on my own resources to depending on God's resources to make things happen is where it is at. Moving from being concerned more about my inadequacy for situations at hand to whether or not I actually love others is also where it is at.¹

Seeing That More Change Is Needed:

I started praying early during my Dark Journey that God would save me from my sins. I later added to this by asking God to humble me and enable me to practice humility. Then I prayed for the Holy Spirit to convict me of my hidden sins. Lastly, I began to pray for sensitivity of heart. I wanted to be able to have mercy on those in need. I wanted to be able to show heartfelt compassion to those who are suffering. I really wanted to be able to love my neighbor as myself. After all, God had said to me that He was digging tunnels of love in my heart earlier in my Dark Journey!

Removing More Insensitivity:

In the past, when people spoke to me about serious things, I would do the opposite of what I wanted to do – I would smile instead of show a sorrowful countenance. Something was terribly wrong with my heart. I wanted to show empathy, or sympathy

¹ Cf. Larry Crabb, *Connecting*, Word Publishing (1997), pp. 103-115

to whoever was in need, to shed tears with those who mourn, but I could not do it. The smiling was always embarrassing, and I always struggled to get rid of it.

The Holy Spirit would eventually make me aware that to become more sensitive to others I needed to give up hidden attitudes and misguided notions. Such as:

- Resenting other Religious traditions
- Being hard on myself
- Coveting intellectual and creative powers and believing the evil spirits' lies about God's intent as far as my situation was concerned
- Buried anger turned into hatred.
- Needing to keep God-made-boundaries intact... no minimizing or denying the wrongfulness of evil deeds.
- Learning to see myself as God sees me. And think accordingly. Real truth sets us free to love.
- Seeing lies for what they are with God teaching me what is what. Therefore the need to know God's voice which His children can do. In other words re-programing my mind and healing my heart.
- Seeing sin as unhealthy (dysfunctional) and good as healthy (doing as it was designed to do) like the Hebrew Bible does instead of seeing evil as they are defined in popular society and some fundamental sects. And aiming to do things not because society or religion defines them as good, but because it is healthy to do so.
- Establishing God's will as my goal in prayer, thoughts, desires, and actions which will deal a deathblow to my selfishness.

In order to deal with being hard on myself I had to discover why I was being hard on myself.

I finally understood that I'm unworthy of more knowledge, memory, power, intelligence, creativeness, and imagination than what I already have. These are things I used to hunger after, pray for, and try to wrestle God into giving me. Just like the creature named Gollum in The Lord Of The Rings trilogy, I had been entranced by my desire for power. For Gollum the power he craved was in the Ruling ring. He thought it would bring him long life, but it became his downfall. Gollum envied Frodo because he possessed the ring of power. And I also used to envy others who were more gifted than I was. I now thank God that He never gave me the aptitudes I had previously set my heart on. I would have become a monster with greed, jealousy, and pride eating up the little humanity I possessed. I would have become like Gollum literally consumed by the ring. I now praise Almighty God for this realization and acceptance.

Changes In How I Read The Bible:

Then after I began to walk with Jesus in 1989, I found certain parts exciting, and certain parts boring. I felt convicted by some passages, misunderstood other passages, had legalistic interpretations of still other passages, and became proud because I thought that I understood the remaining passages.

And when I read the Scriptures, I was always looking to see if they were consistent.

True, I had some faith, but deep down inside my heart I questioned or doubted the Scripture's consistency, and accuracy whenever I read it. And I rarely read Scripture so that I could apply it to my life. I read Scripture sort of like I read Math books at the time. I read them in order to broaden my knowledge and understanding on a few favorite issues. Because I was blind to so much of the sin in my life, I saw the truth in the Bible as something I needed to fit into my theological system of understanding. And not as something that had meaning and applicability to the way I lived my life.

After I entered my Dark Journey, I found myself trying to capture the same emotions when reading Scripture that I had after I started following Jesus in 1989. But as I entered the darkness, I began to see that I understood very little about what I had so much emotion tied up in to. I think that I appreciated the beauty in the words from Jesus, but understood so very little of what He had to communicate to me. I was still eating spiritual Pabulum.

Since having the illness of schizophrenia, and up until a few years ago, Scripture seemed lifeless to me. A cloud hung over it, and my understanding of it when I read it at times seemed contradictory. I also did not trust certain portions of certain Bible translations (both Protestant and Catholic) on controversial topics. Then slowly out of the vocabulary I learnt from my suffering, and the guidance from the Holy Spirit, I began to piece together little bits of understanding that began to form a basis spiritually for the way I conducted myself in life. Meditation on the Scriptures also became very rich, and profitable.

In my meditations, I have become more interested in having the same feelings of compassion, empathy, sympathy for, and solidarity with those whose sufferings are recorded in the Bible like Jesus did and does. I want this because I want to do the same things that Jesus did back then, and still does today. But seeing that I am not Jesus, I hope to imitate Him in my own small way. I also became more interested in whether or not I was living according to the Spirit as opposed to the flesh. Simply put the question became: "Am I obeying Jesus?"

I later realized that when I interpreted Scripture, my attitude was one that was proud, as if by my own cleverness I understood it. So I decided to repent, and found God speaking to me through the Scriptures more intimately.

Later, in early 2008 I became aware that my attitude towards the book of Psalms was not right. I realized that I expected very little good from reading it; indeed I expected less than nothing from it. I always felt it a dreadful duty to read the Psalm passages in my daily devotional time. Sure I had some affection for a few of the Psalms that caught my fancy in the past, and that I attempted to memorize at different times. But I did not expect to receive from God when He spoke through the Psalms, and so I missed the blessings He wanted to impart to me through them. Man lives on every word that proceeds from God's mouth. So with God's help I changed my attitude from being closed minded to open minded. I no longer put the book of Psalms into a box. What a relief!

I began to realize in late Oct. 2011 that when I am reading Scripture it is a good thing to pay attention to my emotions, my thoughts, my motives, my attitudes, and my goals. This way I can let the Holy Spirit speak to me and lead me into green pastures. It allows

my mind to be renewed, my attitudes to be healed... because if we don't watch our motives and goals clearly we will use God's word on people in ways it was never intended. We will become legalistic, judgmental, proud, or humanistic; or a combination of these if we start from a sour disposition, and our blind spots will grow.

I am seeing today (Saturday, September 21, 2013) that the way I tried to interpret the Holy Scriptures in the past was minimalist, mathematical, philosophical and devoid of human warmth, unable to see beyond the letters and words to a reality BIGGER than the universe. Unable to see the people, their burdens, guilt, joys, courage, and determined to not use my imagination so as to only stay true to what could be logically deduced from the verses with my own faulty reasoning! I argued like a lawyer would... not like a child whose imagination soars on wings like eagles.

Symptoms Of My Schizophrenia Experienced During This Period Of Time:

As time continued to move forward my symptoms still continued to change. Here is a glimpse of what I was experiencing:

- My moods and perceptions are tinkered with by what I call evil spirits.
- I have visual hallucinations – images appear distorted in my mind's eye. I can never tell when I'm seeing a true image. Sometimes they appear very fat, other times very skinny. Sometimes they appear very beautiful, and at other times very ugly. I have a poor physical self-image because of this. Also, at different times demons won't let me understand the content on written pages.
- I have smell hallucinations. Most of the time I can't smell anything. When I do smell things they are usually bad smells, and I'm uncertain whether they are real or not.
- I have touch hallucinations – I feel disconnected from my body most of the time. Something attacks me around my throat every now and then, and sometimes I can't breathe.
- There are many times when I don't understand simple things; often I can't concentrate properly.
- Many times my thinking is confused and doesn't make sense.
- I have to fight off delusions. Something is trying to make me into a lunatic. These delusions come in the form of paradigm shifts in my mind and usually have to do with my perceptions on good and evil. They seem so real.
- I can't do many of the things that I used to do before I became ill. Like thinking clearly and do mathematics.
- When I feel confident it feels artificial; when I feel discouraged it feels all too real. I feel like I'm walking on really thin ice.
- I experience Anhedonia² a lot of the time – when I do feel good, which is rare, I feel like the demons are trying to lead me astray.
- Parts of my personality and life skills are eaten up by the illness and demons that are trying to destroy me.

² This is loss of the ability to experience pleasurable emotions.

- Exercise is made much too difficult because of my suffering; I'm still sixty to eighty pounds over weight. This is also amplified by one of the side effects from my medication – weight gain.

Although I have these symptoms at this time, they can flare up without notice; stress, pressure, and anxiety can amplify them many fold over.

An Encouraging Dream:

Even after things started to get better, I often felt like I was walking on really thin ice. In a conversation with my mother I told her that I still had really bad psychotic episodes. I told her that I felt like the hurricane force storm that had come ten years ago to darken my life might possibly come back in a different form. Mom saw where I was coming from, and suggested that I felt like God was just waiting to hit me over the head. I agreed with her that I felt that way.

In response to this, God gave Renee Schommer, a dear sister in Christ, that I had met at Alpha a dream. In the dream, some other people who also attended Alpha, Renee herself, and I were working in a small city that had one really tall building, and many smaller ones no higher than two or three stories.

We would go into the smaller buildings whenever want or need motivated us, but we didn't go into the really tall building. Our place of work was a hospital or shelter that was oblong and an awful shade of green. Renee said that she dreamt that a lady named Gale came into the hospital with cancer.

The next day in the dream, Renee asked me what had happened to Gale, and I said that Gale was no longer with us. Renee said that she remembered the colors as well as the feeling of the dream. She said that in the dream when I told her the news that Gale was no longer with us she felt calmness and peace in her heart over the situation.

When Renee told me this dream she asked me if I knew somebody by the name of Gale. I said I didn't think that I did, but I would venture a guess at what the dream meant.

The woman named Gale in Renee's dream was not a person per-se. The dictionary defines a gale as a very strong wind that reaches between 50 and 88 km/h. After many years of a hurricane force storm in my life, my Dark Journey slowly turned into a gale. The woman named Gale was the strong wind that had kept me worried about my future. Gale had cancer because her time was coming to an end. The reason why we were working at a hospital or shelter is significant for two reasons: (1) the hospital represents the place of my sickness where the gale blew, the place that God used to heal my spiritual woes. And (2) God used those working at the hospital, those praying for me, to get me healthy.

When I told Renee in the dream that Gale is no longer with us, I believe that it was God's way of saying that this really strong wind's days are limited! It is also His way of telling me that the worst is over. Renee's dream and my interpretation of it both of which I believe are from God, is meant to put away all the fear that the future might bring. The peace that Renee felt in her heart during the dream when I told her that gale is no longer with us strikes another cord.

At one point in time I had asked Rod Young, the person who had prophesied over me, how the promise to be broken into Freedom was communicated to him for me. I don't

remember the exact wording he used but he said that when he asked God about me, he felt intense pain that slowly turned into peace. He therefore interpreted these communications from God as me having to first experience brokenness, which would later turn into Freedom. And the Freedom meant peace!

After I initially grasped the good news of this dream, I went through a terrible psychosis inspired by the demons that have tormented me through my schizophrenia. Just like when Moses brought the good news to the Israelites that God would free them from their slavery in Egypt, Pharaoh (who is symbolic of Satan) immediately oppressed them so that they would think that the good news was a lie. Or that the news wasn't as good as it seemed.

The second last detail of the dream to be uncovered by me was that bit about freely going into the small buildings, but not venturing into the really tall one. The really tall building is meant to be symbolic of the Tower of Babel. This tower represents everything that is wrong with our present world system including the commonly lived out belief that we can get to Heaven by our own good works. I believe that the reason God put this in Renee's dream was that God wanted to communicate to Renee and me that we would not partake in this lying world system.

The last detail confirming that the dream was indeed from God is this. After Renee shared the dream with me. I began to read George Orwell's book named 1984. In the book (to my surprise) there was also an oblong green building just like in Renee's dream. To me this was no mere coincidence. The plot in 1984 was about truth, deception, and torture. Something I was very familiar with because of my illness. During this time I was unable to complete reading this book, because I was still susceptible to terrible psychotic episodes. But it heartened me that both the dream and the book had this common detail.

This dream confirms that in the long-term peace, Freedom, and less stormy weather are in order for me. I didn't have to worry about anything because God is in control!

What Was The Gale?

God's Freedom is only pursued by those who and thirst for righteousness. But that does not mean that they don't experience temptation like everyone else. A strong temptation for me, which I call "my thorn in my flesh," is my desire for earthly security. Because my circumstances never worked out like I thought they would my faith took a beating from the intense waves of confusion that battered me for many years – first from the storm, and then from the gale.

The question: "Does God have a plan for me besides me loving others deeply out of my faith?" bothered me continually for most of my Dark Journey. Closely related to this question was the struggle for security. "People choose security rather than freedom".³ I have been no different. Why? The answer is because with Freedom comes choices, and with choices comes the possibility of failures.

Consider slaves. All their lives they just do what their masters command. They don't worry about whether the early or late rains will come. They don't worry about the prices of supplies or taxes. They don't worry about what the crop will fetch at the harvest.

³ David Adam, Forward to Freedom, Upper Room Books 2001, p. 23

They don't worry about others stealing from them cause they have never owned anything themselves. When slaves become free they usually do everything out of fear because they have no faith or confidence that things will work out. They will more easily bow down to idols or demons, because they promise easy returns for their wages. Slaves know little about love, friendships, or commitments. They do as they are told. During my Dark Journey I was tempted to choose the security that the world has to offer over the Freedom that the invisible God has to offer!

For many years during the Dark Journey I had tried to form a plan to follow in an attempt to become financially self-sufficient, but for the reasons as outlined in this book the doors would not open. God did not seem to bless anything I did. Confidence comes from setting goals and achieving them. After a while, I lost confidence in thinking about my future because of my failures.

I felt such pain and hopelessness when I thought about the future, and this made me prone to envy because of the apparent riches of others and my poverty. It was a battle. Trusting in God is the right pathway to take, and things hardly ever work out the way we think they will. This can be good news! Whatever else I did, I had to daily choose to put my faith in God to look after my future.

The good news is that when darkness, chaos, and confusion reign in one's life, God often uses it as an opportunity or pathway to something better than what we had before. That is, provided we don't lose our faith in the process. I'm still not self-sufficient at this time, but after much prayer, dialogue with family members (especially with my dad), friends, and mental health professionals I came up with a workable plan in my eyes. It takes into account my illness, my weaknesses, my strengths, and my desires.

After these affairs were set in order, I was no longer under so much stress and insecurity. The gale had blown itself out!

From this point on in my story, I reckoned that the worst was over; I would say along with Éomer in *The Lord Of The Rings*:

The dark night has passed, and day has come again. But day has brought with it strange tidings.⁴

Since there is no cure for my schizophrenia yet, that means I have it for life. It also means having to suffer from its many symptoms for a long time to come. In part this means having to take medications (along with receiving their side effects) for the rest of my life which is a small price to pay for better health.

The gale passed for about three years. Then things got more challenging. During this three-year period I was able to deal with my past failed romances by repenting from my misguided reactions to their failures.

The Gift Of Even More Peace, Patience And Self-Esteem:

When I was in high school, there came a point in time when I became hungry for

⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord Of The Rings, Part II; The Two Towers*, Ballantine Publishers (1991), p. 188

academic achievement. I began to study with great effort and started to improve my marks to the delight of my teachers and parents. The only problem was that I put a lot of pressure on myself. I got more upset because of my mistakes on tests than when I morally failed the people in my life.

Put another way, I created an idol. The idol of intellectual perfection. And this idol was not gentle with me. It sucked the life out of me, and caused me to have a break down while in university mid-way through the completion of my B.Sc. degree. I recovered a little bit afterwards, but I was never my former self. I began to hate working with mathematics. My old way of doing mathematics was harsh and ate up all of the enjoyment I used to feel in learning new concepts.

After I renewed my walk with Jesus, God gave me a vision of a dead tree off in the distance. I knew that the vision was meant for me because without telling my parents about the vision they bought me a picture of a similar looking tree as a present back then:



For a better view see the Photo section from this Website.

I was perplexed about what it meant, but I did not pursue its meaning by asking God what it all meant. This mystery remained unsolved for many years.

Then as God started to break me through my Dark Journey, I started to see the vision of the old dead tree as a metaphor for remnants of the old life within me. I came to see it as the old dead structure (of how I related to God, people, and myself) that was left over within me, and that God was going to dismantle through breaking me into Freedom.

This dead structure that had taken root in my heart managed to obscure the perceptions of my conscience and also distorted the image of my true self. The self that was created a new by God in Christ Jesus, and is still under construction even now. This tree like structure had no life in it, yet it grew in size over the years bearing bad fruit with my cooperation.

In a conversation with someone, God showed me that an unbending, harsh, competitive, mean streak was still at work within me. I knew this when I reflected that if I were to get married and have children. Then the first thing that I desired for my

children was that they be intelligent. Morally I knew that this was wrong and unacceptable.

I also realized that there was a lot of insensitivity on my part towards others and myself when it came to being smart or stupid. I began to realize that there was some truth in the words: "if you can't love yourself you can't love others." I used to disagree with this, agreeing with a radio preacher that if all we did was to try to love ourselves we would never get around to loving others.

Coming to these conclusions I realized that I needed to work through these issues using the Twelve (Plus Four) Steps. When I did my self-esteem skyrocketed.

I already knew that I could not expect God to give me more things if I wasn't thankful for what I already had. Instead of only being thankful for the gifts that God did not give to me, I became thankful to God for the gifts that He did give to me. Because God rooted even more of this dead structure out of my heart through my repentance, I became more content with my station in life.

Recovered Memories:

Each time I gave up one of the hidden resentments, or vows recorded in this book. I also recovered the memories surrounding those times when I made the resentments against those I did.

A Major Change In Medication:

Because my diarrhea got so bad, my doctor and I decided that perhaps a change in medication would help. He then switched me on September 23, 2003 to a newer medication called Zyprexa that is also known as Olanzapine. Surprisingly, this newer medication worked much faster than the older one. I had thought that I would be stuck on Risperdal for the rest of my life. Unfortunately the diarrhea I battled with did not go away. Many years later I'd realize that the diarrhea was a result of a medication I took meant to ease my back pain.

From Sucker To Lover:

In early January of 2004, I was watching a talent show on TV, and there was one contestant whose act the judges had a lot of criticism for. One of the judges in particular commented that the singer was very selfish because he was trying to draw strength from the audience as opposed to loving the audience with his music through his own strength. The judge was right on the mark.

Then on Saturday, January 31, 2004 while at a church function. The Holy Spirit made me aware that a similar spiritual dynamic [not to do with singing or performing] was at work within me. Although I am not even an amateur singer, I always felt a cavity in my heart, a weakness, and a sucker branch that sought approval from others, and that could give nothing back. Seeing this I repented in faith, and some of this weakness was taken out of me by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Then on March 18, 2004 the Lord destroyed even more of this dynamic at work in me. This time, God made me aware of my selfishness when it came to my failed, past romances. After I changed my attitude and repented in faith, I could feel my emotions much more. I didn't feel like a hollow or gutted man so much anymore.

Next, on March 22, 2004, I was watching a program on TV, when a woman on a show said that she had a heart for those who have been the objects of ridicule, and haven't

been given a chance to express their true selves because of lies. At first because of the way that she said it, I looked with scorn at her. I then realized that I was very unloving towards her, and that prompted me to pray a heartfelt prayer of repentance. I began to feel emotions for people that I never had before. Emotions that those who are on the path to love will inevitably feel if they don't give up.

On Wednesday May 14, 2004 the Lord Most High made me aware of a side or old attitude within my heart that He wanted me to deal with and that I knew was there all along. This attitude could best be described as follows. I know that it saw itself as weak, lacking endurance, hoping for short commitments, hoping for nothing too taxing, wanting to be pampered, hoping to get away with doing the minimum required, willing to work because it was respectable to work, but never enjoying the work, lazy, slothful, and full of impurity.

After the Lord showed me this despicable attitude, I knew He expected me to discard with this attitude of doing things through repentance. All I had to do was to fight it, and behold the day after this dross was recognized it was scooped out of my spirit through repentance, leaving me with a new attitude. The old was gone, behold the new had arrived.

Because I want to be even more open to the gifts of prophesy, visions, and dreams from the Lord. Seeing how useful they are to encourage, strengthen, and invite change in our lives I began to pray for these gifts to be real in my daily life. I would later realize being very critical or judgmental of others takes away from me being able to hear God's voice. Now it is true that if we attempt to repent so we will hear God's voice then our act is self-righteous. True repentance is always God initiated.

A Promise From God:

I was sitting on the floor in my bedroom, and I said to myself, "There are two things I desire, (1) the ability to love, and (2) the opportunity to love." Immediately God communicated to me that my desires would be fulfilled. All I can say is that God is good and worth waiting for.

On Not Attempting To Use God As A Tool:

Using one's spirituality or relationship with God to get people to like oneself or bond with oneself needs to be repented from. This I did with God's help.

Wanting To Belong:

Who doesn't want to belong? I did and still do. But when one is rejected like I was the heart can get morally sick. Anger, bitterness, and hatred towards others can grow to cause insensitivity and depression.

Working Principles?

Working one principle or few principles to exclusion of common sense and listening to others and even God is not a good idea. Relationships can be the place where naivety and shallowness are conquered.

Because I took the advice to meet with others I began to encounter a struggle deep within me, that God wanted me to deal with, in order to become more free and loving. I now realize that after my first girlfriend broke up with me and I went out with other women, a very real motivation in my heart was not to love the women I went out with, but to stop them from hurting me. In other words I wanted to stop them from breaking

up with me. I thought that if I achieved the standard of being “Mr. Entertainment”, by taking them out more often (whether I wanted to or not), then they would not break-up with me. They usually broke-up with me anyways. I then repented in faith from this vile, evil self-protection, or selfishness on Sunday, March 20, 2005. I immediately felt disorientated because in repenting I was saying “No” to beating myself over the head for not living up to being the ideal “Mr. Entertainment” or “man.” The long struggle ended. I was no longer worshipping at the false altar of perfectionism in this manner. I was free to be my true self, the self that God intended me to become. I was now free to follow Jesus, the only human who had a right to receive my worship because He was also God.

Later I would realize that I had not forgiven myself completely for not living up to being “Mr. Entertainment.” I was still holding it against myself that I wasn’t perfect. When I realized this and forgave myself I felt freer and less weak or anxious in my mind and heart, I also felt stronger when it came to my skills used for building and keeping relationships going.

On Taking Back My Life:

Have you ever given power over yourself to somebody else? This can happen after a romance goes sour. I did, and afterwards I felt so weak, indecisive, and powerless in certain areas from my life. People pleasers are not like unselfish people – the motivations are different. One is done out of weakness (i.e. fear), the other is done in strength (wanting to love). After I gave my will away when I went window-shopping with others, I felt pressure to please those I was with and acted like a chicken with its head cut off. I felt directionless, and lacked the ability to lead, to choose, and to enjoy my own curiosity – I had lost my own identity. I behaved like a cult member without a cult. As I meditated over this brokenness, I realized that I needed to take my life, my will, my identity, and my curiosity back. I needed to kill my people pleasing nonsense, and the only way to do it was to literally take my will back. It worked – I began to live again, and no longer felt so insecure in my relationships at this time like I used to be. More of my insecurities would have to be dealt with later on.

Insight:

Then on Tuesday, May 3, 2005 the Lord led me to repent from something more fully. When my first girlfriend broke up with me, I consciously made the vow to become perfect. I put all my effort into understanding mathematics (which I saw as perfect), and into having perfect handwriting. I did this hoping that the rejection and pain I felt at the time would not be experienced by me again. When I repented in faith from this attitude, I felt like more falseness was removed from my spirit. I felt even more connected to my spirit (more emotions came to the surface of my consciousness).

Don’t Hunt And Seek For Healing All By Yourself:

Let God into your life listen to Him and follow Him.

A Better Way Of Living:

For a long time I struggled with the following sentence found in the book of James in the New Testament: “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.”⁵ It

⁵ James 2:24 NRSV

is glossed over by most Protestants and Evangelicals and for a time I ignored it too because I really did not understand how it applied to salvation. Thanks to a Catholic Radio Show, I was slowly able to get an idea on why this sentence is found in the Bible, and also why it is true.

There is a certain sense in which this verse is true. It is true that when we cooperate with God in acts of love or good works that we refrain from sin. Jesus came to save us from committing sin, and not to just forgive our sin or deal with guilt. Since doing (or abiding in) the will of God is required from us; not doing the will of God is bad, and is also called living in sin. So when we cooperate with God in the process of doing good works through His power and guidance, then these works save us from doing sins instead. So in this sense our works (done in cooperation with God) save us from our sins (at least the sins that we would have done if we had not been doing or abiding in God's will). Hence good works (done in cooperation with God) save us from sin and aid us on the path to final salvation. Jesus came to save us from our sins, and not just from guilt, or from Hell.

“Repentance” which is something that Jesus and John the Baptist spoke plenty about is a requirement for salvation. Proof of repentance is good fruit, or good works, or love done in cooperation with God. Without allowing God to clean us up we will never bear this good fruit. We need to submit ourselves to God, and cooperate with God in the process of salvation. We ought not to walk ahead of God thinking that we know where He is leading us to, and what He is up to and expects us to do. When Jesus was on earth proclaiming the Good News, there was a time when some of His followers walked ahead of Him thinking that they knew where He was going, and they also assumed they knew His will before hand. But they were wrong. The account is found in Luke 18:35-43. I made this mistake too, and so was restless, without peace, focusing too much on my sins, losing my bearing, and not focused enough on where Jesus wanted to lead me. Being too focused on my sins, I was distracted from doing God's will. For some time I was very hard on myself. Indeed I was on a search, seek, find, and destroy (or repent) mission when it came to my sins. And after a while I was doing it all in my own energy too. No wonder I felt so little love within me on a regular basis. I put a lot of pressure on myself. I was walking ahead of Jesus thinking that I knew where I was going (and where He was going). I thought I knew what I was doing. No wonder I felt so oppressed, and so frustrated. I was made for joy. I was made for love. I was made for Freedom. I was made for God. But I was too preoccupied with myself.

God had told me through my friend Jana that I need not work my version of the Twelve Steps for sometime. It took my friend Dan's insight or wisdom to slow me down, to give me more perspective, to get me to enjoy the journey, to enjoy God's fellowship, and to get more focused on love instead of on it's opposite in my life: my sins. Instead of walking ahead, I am now humbly following Jesus as best I can. I am no longer guessing, assuming, or thinking that I know where Jesus is leading me to, and what He expects me to do. I am now more open to correction, and God's leading. Thinking that we are in the “know” easily produces pride and closed mindedness. Approaching life with patience, humility, openness, and trusting that God will lead the way is the path to aim for. I am now aiming for this way of life. I'm no longer attempting to tackle life all by

myself. I find this difficult to practice (to become dependent on God) – I keep falling off the path every now and then. But when I hop back onto the path again and again – Oh the peace I feel; and that with such depth. Cooperation with God is an important key. I now hope to let God do His part, and myself to do my part. I can smell Freedom.

On Discarding A Large Part Of My Judgmental Attitude For Good:

As I continued to follow Jesus; that is to search for truth that would set me free to love others more deeply and authentically. God finally set in motion a confrontation with someone who challenged my misguided notions on judging others. For nearly two hours we went back and forth debating and challenging each other with me getting angrier and angrier as time went by. I felt that this person was telling me that I couldn't go about 'correcting others' on one hand but that this is exactly what she was trying to do with me. I thought that she was being a hypocrite. We parted company both visibly disturbed and upset at what had taken place.

When I did think about what she had said (and she had said a lot) I thought up all sorts of 'truths' or 'arguments' to challenge her the next time we spoke with each other. But the more I did this the more irritated and angry I became with her. I felt very unloving towards her. I felt no peace in my mind, and certainly did not feel like I was abiding in Jesus. When I met other Christians shortly afterwards and I shared a bit about what I thought had taken place in that confrontation. They all seemed to take my side, but I felt no consolation or peace because I had not told her view in clarity. I met many Christians whose theology I respected and from whom I would seek consolation, but I felt none, and for days I felt extremely irritated at my opponent's supposed hypocrisy. Then one person I met after Mass said something (on an unrelated topic) that clicked in my mind. He said that we couldn't force anyone to do anything against his or her will. I then began to see that this was what I was attempting to do with the person I had the argument with. I thought that if I marshaled enough truth and hit her over the head enough times with it she would finally agree with me. I not only had this attitude with her, but also with others. I then began to see the light on what it meant to "not judge others". I decided that I would phone her and apologize for my bad behavior. It worked, I began to feel less weighed down, less disturbed; and the anger also evaporated. I then began to see the truth in her position on the main disagreement that we had. The more I saw it, the more love I felt in my heart. I also began to see the ludicrousness of my position. I repented, and gave God His Judgment seat back. Like I said, the argument went on for nearly two hours. Here in brief or skeleton form were the main positions:

(My Flawed Position At The Time) I felt that if anyone (Christian or Non-Christian) did something wrong, or was on the wrong path then I had the moral right/obligation/opportunity to correct him or her or to remove the speck from his or her eye (But I left out the part about "provided I had no wood in my own eye" and I also didn't realize that the correction could only be applied to Christians under this condition). I reasoned that if there was a Judgment on the last day, then to warn those doing evil acts (even when those acts are none of my business) is a compassionate thing to do. I felt this way, but (thankfully) in reality I was not courageous enough to implement what I believed most of the time. I would have hurt a lot of people if I had

and destroyed many relationships at that. For instance, if someone started to use profanity around me I felt I had the right to tell him or her that it was morally wrong and that God would punish him or her in the end if they did not stop it. Thankfully I never had the courage to do just that.

(My Opponent's Position) She said that this was judging and preaching and so was unacceptable. She said that the way to handle someone who used the Name "Jesus" in a disrespectful manner, or swore using the word "God" followed by the word "damn" was to tell him or her that one was offended and to ask the person to not do it again in one's presence. If they asked why then one could tell them why one believed that it was wrong. In this way one would not throw one's pearls before swine like Jesus taught.

She was right on this point. All I'd do if I judged a Non-Christian in this way or preached to him or her would be to violate a boundary belonging to the offender. And in some cases make the offender more and more mad or more rebellious or hostile to my cherished messages and me. My way of handling this situation had many flaws. Now there is more to be said on this.

As the days past I noticed that my former inner attitude of "moral policing" other people's behavior was gone. I was no longer judging anyone; instead I was able to love them, have affection towards them, and to be less selfish towards them. I became that much more patient and at peace towards those in front of me in store or bank line-ups. In the past I had so passionately attempted to love but felt so restricted or handicapped from doing so until I gave God His Judgment seat back. This learning curve was pure Hell. I felt so much pain because of what was happening. God was using this person to literally "break" me into Freedom.

Later, I would realize that my conversations with others were immensely enriched. I became more eager and less afraid to enter into conversations with Non-believers because I did not feel pressure to judge, or correct them. I felt so much freer. I no longer pulled back as easily out of fear when talking with others.

This victory over darkness also evaporated the pressure I felt to evangelize others in the wrong way. I realized later that I disliked having to evangelize in the past because I was doing it the wrong way. The old way involved thinking that I had a responsibility to judge others by informing them that certain things they were doing or saying were morally wrong. No wonder I dreaded this, and attempted to keep my distance from others. I am now much more approachable. I am no longer ashamed of talking about God, and usually only share with others the Good News when they show an interest in it, seem open to it, or ask me about the reasons for the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Because I feel so much more love within me, I am certain that others sense that too, and are drawn to the Jesus within me. Jesus draws people to Himself in this way, and people embrace Him because He is authentic love.

Is There A Better Way?

As I continued to walk with Jesus, I realized that I put a lot of pressure on myself, and when I did this, I was blocking the grace that Jesus wanted to give me.

Using pressure or hatred on myself to achieve goals in every area of my life was normal

to me for so many years. I would confess this to Jesus, but I would have to wait a long time before God would deal with this dysfunction within me by getting to the root of the problem.

By Faith Or Sight?

For a long time I wanted so badly to be able to feel my emotions and to be moved by them. Every time I thought that they were partially restored I'd get into trouble because what I felt was leading me away from love. People who go by their emotions or feelings with the goal to only feel good will do whatever they feel like doing rightly or wrongly. People who go by faith in the truth and emotions from the gut (Holy Spirit guided intuition... having the goal to love as opposed to feel good) are stronger. There are many things that we need to do that we may not always feel like doing. If we do what we believe God expects from us then we will more often than not stay away from sin. People who go by their feelings in order to feel good, or be gratified will feel like sinning often and every now and then will land up sinning regularly because they feel like it and do what they feel like doing. There is power in going by faith and intuition. There is much weakness in going by feelings whose goals are to be gratify oneself. Why? Because so many feelings we have are based on our insecurities, what we don't seem to have, and the desire to have or be happy. Most of us have a lot of insecurities, and are coveting one thing or another. We are often harsher on ourselves than are others on us. If we follow our faith in the truth eventually our feelings will re-align themselves. The right kind of Truth will set us free. Not all feelings are bad. Feelings that are a result of doing something out of love (unselfishly) are precious. Feelings that motivate acts of love are also good.

I can aim to feel a certain way in order to give; or I can give to feel a certain way. The latter is more lived-out than the former. Aiming to feel so we will love is human manipulation and rarely works. We can't leave God out of the equation. I have learned that if I want to stay away from sin in my life then I can't go purely by what I feel from moment to moment. I might feel very distant from God, but I know that my faith says He couldn't be any closer to me because He is the glue that holds everything together.

Setting My Heart On True Happiness:

One saying from the Buddha is: "desire leads to suffering". I don't know what he meant by that since I'm not a Buddhist and never intend to become one. But for me I now realize that there is some truth in the saying from a Christian perspective. Let me explain.

I agree that when we set our hearts on material goods, that eventually, when we get them, they don't bring the happiness we desired them to bring. Hence the saying, "desire leads to suffering." But not all desire leads to suffering. C.S. Lewis said that if we discover a desire that cannot be fulfilled in this life then perhaps we were made for the next life. And I happen to agree with him that ultimately only God can satisfy the desires of our hearts because He made us for Himself.

Not all people set their hearts on material goods to bring them happiness. Some people like myself have made their happiness contingent on the people they meet on their journeys in this life. But people disappoint us so easily. Romances and friendships can and do grow sour. Hence the saying, "desire leads to suffering". The problem with

making other people the condition for one's happiness is that we give them power over us. This is something that God did not intend. People all too often abuse power because they are flawed in some real ways. When God showed me that I was guilty of giving people power over me I repented from this and felt more alive, solid, stronger and joyful than before.

After I came to these conclusions (and repented) I realized my aversion to reading novels or watching movies had disappeared. I now know that I did not want to feel bad when the plots "twisted and turned" in directions that I did not want them to go. Now I enjoy the novels and movies that I read or watch more so than before and what a joy this is! Praise God!

Death To More Selfishness:

For a long time (even before I had schizophrenia) I wanted to die because it looked that much more attractive than living out my painful existence here on earth. I wanted it so badly that it would not have bothered me if someone else took my life swiftly. I then came to realize that this was wrong. So I repented from my selfish attitude, and instead became committed to living life even if it meant a painful existence. I then also realized that it was better if I lived instead of having someone else incur and live with the guilt and consequences of killing me. When this issue was dealt with I found a whole new attitude within me of wanting to live the life I was given.

On Not Letting Others Determine My Self Worth:

As I grew up into a teenager and later on into adulthood, I gave a lot of power over to my peers in an effort to belong. If they seemed kind I felt good; if they seemed distant I felt bad. I let them determine my self-worth. Gradually God allowed a certain situation to come about where I was shown that this old mindset was still in play. I then realized that I didn't need to let any other person's likes or dislikes set my self-esteem. I found a little more freedom, but later I would realize that there was more that needed to be dealt with in this area!

Dealing With More Insensitivity In Me:

Putting people into ugly boxes is what insensitive people do really well. I know I have done plenty of that.

Dealing With Even More Insensitivity:

After I came down with schizophrenia, and before I was diagnosed, a very BIG part of me was insensitive towards others. For instance, my mother suffered emotionally because of what I was going through but I saw her suffering more as a "bargaining chip" with God to get me healthy again instead of being grateful to my mother for her compassion towards me. My thinking was that if I had to suffer at times, why shouldn't others also suffer with me of like I did. This logic of un-grace dried up so much of the compassion within me. It wasn't until Saturday, October 14, 2006 that God led me to deal with this root of insensitivity in my heart by leading me to repent or give up this attitude.

A Question In My Mind:

Through most of my journey into darkness, I felt such pain and hopelessness when it came to financial and work related issues (as I related before) because these issues brought a lot of temptation and despair into my life. Why God never took me out of it,

or prevented me from undergoing all of that suffering was a question in the back of my mind that I never had an answer for until later when I realized that God wanted to show me what is in my heart. By showing me what is in my heart, He was able to humble me. By humbling me God was in the process of making me a more passionate lover of others and Himself. In realizing this, I realized that a part of me was committed to doing anything to make it through the difficulties ahead even if it were sinful. That is why I have learned to pray: “Lord God give me neither poverty (i.e. living out on the streets, begging for food, and having no place to lay my head) nor riches (more than I know what to do with wisely): If I get poverty I’ll steal and bring your Holy Name into disrepute; If I become rich I might forget your goodness and get proud (and not give and serve where I ought to).” Considering Satan’s empty promises as possibilities is not a good place to be in. Renouncing Satan and all his empty promises allowed me to become even more committed to following Jesus Christ in the present.

Taking More Of My Mask Off:

Thankfully God put it into the heart of one of my supervisors to say to me, “Everything is OK with you René” about two weeks ago while at work. I disagreed with him then, but then later, on December 2, 2006 while interacting with a coworker, I realized that “Yes”, my supervisor was right, that a part of me that wanted to be accepted, white washed things, put on a mask to cover reality, and gave into the fear of rejection all because I wanted acceptance. When I saw this energy within me, I realized that I could repent from it through the grace of Jesus. When I did, and it took some getting used to, I was no longer mister “Yes” or mister “Nice guy”.

Eventually I realized a strange phenomena was occurring: I was getting more and more angry, irritable and edgy around others, but when I was by myself I felt fine and at peace. Then on December 11, 2006 I realized why this was happening. I know that I had decided to no longer whitewash myself or wear masks to please others, but that I had yet to submit myself to God wholly in this area. What else could explain my radical and opposing attitudes of anger when with others (and it did not matter who I was with) and peace when just by myself? Either one is attempting to please others, God, or oneself. I needed to submit to God in this area. This I decided to do through the grace and leading of the Holy Spirit.

Intolerance:

Different faith traditions are often pitted against each other in rivalry. Some traditions (knowingly or unknowingly) tell lies about opposing groups they see as threats. Some traditions focus on the things that divide, by focusing on the “dirty laundry” of other traditions. Some faith traditions try to find common ground and dialogue (not judging the motives of those they disagree with). And finally other traditions try to pick fights based on doctrinal differences, in affect saying that because there are serious disagreements on certain issues that there can’t be any genuine goodness in other faith groups. This last group is where I often found myself. There is nothing wrong with speaking the truth in love. All faith traditions have dirty laundry so to speak. My past attitude was to put followers from other faith traditions into boxes, and to somehow stay angry with them because of disagreements on doctrinal issues. I would judge people from other faith traditions as enemies, worthy of my anger, and not love them

the way Jesus did and does. I would wrongly judge other faith group's motives. This wood was yanked out of my eyes, and would have to be done so over and over again until God showed me what was at the bottom of me judging others (i.e. hardening my heart towards those who are different).

A Root To Being Hard On Myself:

God then showed me that I was hard on myself when it came to love. I put a lot of pressure on myself to love, sort of like a taskmaster with a whip attempting to correct any deviation from what I thought was wholesome love. This attitude was rooted in pride, and could not bear love. I was being tough on myself... and so no wonder I was barren of love for others so much of the time: If you don't love yourself you can't love others. Put another way, if you aren't gentle with yourself, you won't be gentle with others. I realized that when I noticed that I was less affectionate with others than I liked that my reaction to this involved a tendency to revert back to being hard on myself in an attempt to bring about more love for others in my heart and actions. In short I would put pressure on myself to love even more. But this would backfire every time, and dry up the love in my heart. For the time being I resolved to change my attitude as much as possible with God's help. But unfortunately this issue would not get resolved for many more years.

Dealing With More Past Rejections That Became More Intolerance:

As a child my peers rejected me many times over while I was at School during recesses. This may be sad but it was not the problem. My reaction to this situation was at fault. Because I was rejected so many times, I took on very unkind, scoffing, mocking or critical attitudes against others. These attitudes would form the basis for how I would view others for a long time. It was motivated out of rejection and been hurt. I reacted in a way where I could not give others a chance to be themselves around me, I would put others into boxes, and it would be very difficult for me to build new relationships with others because I was so critical. But many years later God showed me that I still viewed others through this distorting lens of lies. My critical and malicious attitudes were the fruit, but even if one repents from fruit by picking it off, it will grow back if the roots aren't dealt with. I would need to find the roots of this poison inside of me for the fruit to be dealt with permanently.

Abiding Is More About Relationship Than Rules:

Because God showed me that I needed to abide in Jesus in order to stay free. I slowly got confused about what I had to do in order to abide in Jesus. I came up with plenty of rules and the more I attempted to practice them the farther I travel away from love and the power to love. I realized that most of my adult life I was consumed with following the right rules to get things I wanted and to stay out of trouble. As if the right rule would make everything right. When one is living by rules in the back of one's mind there is a serious insecurity: One is worried about what rule one is not following because life is so full of unknowns and uncertainties. Don't get me wrong; rules can be a good thing. Thinking that by just keeping certain rules one will make everything right is attractive but it won't bring about love. I know because I tried this and it failed BIG time. Rules aren't the source to life – Jesus is the source to life and love.

When we seek to follow rules no matter how good, we will inevitably measure ourselves by those rules and fall short no matter what. We will also start to measure others by those same rules, and since no one is perfect we will begin to judge them... something we are forbidden to do by Jesus. The only way out is to abide in Jesus.

We don't follow rules to abide in Jesus. We abide in Jesus to love. Rules show when we don't love those people who cross our paths.

At this point in my journey I thought that the only way for me to abide in Jesus was to ask Him to let me abide in Him (day in and day out) not because I am so wise for doing so but because I thought it was Jesus' idea, will and joy in granting me the favor. Later on God would show me what I really need to do in order to abide in Jesus. Too many rules will kill one's intuition and freedom; and will box people into corners. When we abide in Jesus we keep the spirit (real intent) of the rules and commandments that God has given us in the moral law. Focused on Jesus one will lose one's insecurity, one will be at peace, one will have understanding and intuition about how to love others, and one will be in union with Jesus through faith and trust. One will be open to correction and growth, to life and to freedom. Life will have its up's and down's, but one will feel secure in Jesus' love.

From Perfectionism To Realism And Freedom:

My friend Michelle sent me the following quote: "There is freedom to fail and learn from your mistakes." This removed even more of my tendency to put pressure on myself to achieve things. I therefore had more breathing room.

Following Jesus:

Because I realized that anger can be good, and I wasn't bad because I was angry at times. I asked myself what I ought to do next. I came to the conclusion that I ought to follow Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. As I engaged in doing so, I felt the freedom I had discovered evaporate, and in its place I found rigidity, dryness, inflexibility, and a great weight fall onto my shoulders. I then asked myself why I had the loss of freedom previously granted to me. I came to the conclusion that when I follow Jesus then intuitively I would follow the Sermon on the Mount. But if I attempted to follow the Sermon on the Mount as if it were a bunch of rules I would not necessarily be following Jesus. I quickly refocused myself and committed myself to following Jesus and the pressure I felt lifted off me somewhat. I now realize that God did not want me to focus on the Sermon during this time because He wanted me to attend to other business.

More Awareness:

I have heard that many people want to be the Pope but few are willing to follow the Pope. Many want to be leaders and few want to be followers. I have been no different. In the past when I was about to hear respected authorities talk on certain topics, I would out of pride get critical of the speakers before they even said anything. Out of my pride I would judge them to be proud. The reason I recognized this within myself was because I saw that it conflicted with Jesus' call to me to love others. This proud attitude blocked some of my ability to love. I repented from it I partially (i.e. I dealt with the fruit not with the roots, and I would have to wait a long time before God put His finger on the roots.)

Recalibration:

Eventually God showed me that I could not jump the gun when it came to fishing for people. I needed to respect boundaries. I realized that I wanted to get into deep and complex ideas about Salvation with those I met before talking with them about the basics or getting to know the people I met. When this was put into place, I could listen to others better, read books other than theological ones again, and see the importance of enjoying the small things that God has placed in our lives for us to enjoy. I realized that we all enjoy communicating on different levels and none of them are to be scoffed at. I need to respect where others are at spiritually. Not everyone can eat meat; many can only enjoy milk. If they say some thing I disagree with, then I can let them know that I agree to disagree. If they ask why I disagree then I can tell them why, but I can't go uninvited: Jesus said for us not to throw our pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot, turn and to attack us. Now I feel free.

A Sinner True And True:

Because of what I was told about the Dark Night as described by Saint John of the Cross I thought that I would become a very virtuous man. So I eventually began to see myself as virtuous, but the problem with that was that when I did I would see sin ooze out of me and I wanted to repress it. Consequently the Holy Spirit showed me that I was still a sinner despite all the virtues He had given me through my Dark Night. As a result I feel more in touch with who I am: I feel it to be true to my very bones that I am a sinner. I feel more humble in admitting my sinfulness, and much more at peace with God and myself.

The Tide Coming In:

As high tides make their way landward. Each wave makes its way a little farther than the previous wave only to retreat. This reclaiming of land by in coming water is what I experienced in the last part of my spiritual journey. Each wave can be compared to me receiving a single (imperfect) revelation, only for the wave to recede because of my limited consciousness or perspective and blindness. Each revelation would gain me more ground only to break and recede. Every revelation would shed a little more light on important truths and so renewed my mind and heart in the process.

Exercising The Higher Right To Give Up Lower Rights:

Very early into my Dark Journey, I began to wrongly think and act out the decision to take what I saw as my right to be respected just like others because I thought my previous behavior was unassertive and done out of weakness. In practical terms this meant asserting my presence while walking on sidewalks with those coming in opposite directions. Problem is that when one closes one's heart in one area, that area can't be used to love others anymore unless one re-opens one's heart through repentance with God's grace.

Because I judged I was worthy of being walked around; when people were slow to comply, or were in the way and slowing my progress I naturally got angry and judgmental towards them. This approach dried much of the love and compassion in my heart for people until I gave up my right. Instead of demanding, taking, and judging I decided to give, and consequently I felt joy within me yet again along with an attitude of love towards others. I now knew the meaning of the Beatitude spoken by Jesus:

“Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the land.” To be meek means to be slow to anger.

Just before this repentance took place and for a little while after I repented in this area, I felt very attacked by the dark side. It’s like the demons knew some thing was up and wanted to discourage me and prevent me from continuing on the way to love. The attacks were very fierce. But after I weathered the storm they eventually gave up, and I began to realize the benefits of what I did with God’s leading. Amen, and Amen!

About Attachments:

Many years back while reading stuff from older authors like Saint John of the Cross, I’d come across the idea of practicing detachment. I also heard other Christians talk about it. But I never really understood this concept (except when it came to money and misguided loyalties to people other than God). I would later see that it is very easy for me to become unloving, unkind, abrasive, unmerciful and selfish towards others. I would later see that these forces within I ought not repress, police, attempt to strangle and instantly have victory over. Working through such emotions slowly with ears open to God’s voice (and doing what He asks) is what I would later see needing to be done. “Unless the Lord builds the house the laborers work in vain.”

Breaking From The Past Even More:

When I was in University many years ago I gradually began to feel overwhelmed and burdened when it came to remembering all the theorems, propositions, formulas, axioms, ideas, and lemmas needed to solve mathematical problems. I eventually came to a crisis of faith in my ability to remember what all those ideas were because of the way I went about it (by putting pressure on myself). I put pressure on myself in part as a response to the breaking up with my first girlfriend.

I eventually felt pushed to my utter limits as I put more and more pressure on myself to remember it all. I eventually felt more and more inadequate, rigid, over taxed, weak, and full of anxiety in this area as a result and functioned more and more poorly. Even after not looking at Math for a long time I realized when God pointed it out to me that I still approached life in the same way when it came to learning new things. I repented in faith from this, and now take the path of trusting Jesus with what I need to know and remember in every day life. Jesus is humble, meek and gentle. I am learning how to follow Him and give up all my burdens and in the process I am finding freedom. As a result, I became much more open to and capable of learning new things. I also stopped hitting myself over my head with how poor I thought my memory was. PRAISE GOD! Amen, and Amen!

Another result of repenting from putting pressure on myself was that I was able to feel the joy I had before the breakup with my first girlfriend. It felt good, but I did not want to feel this joy as I was still angry with her. Later I thought that I needed to forgive her and attempted to do so only to realize that I had never fully accepted my rightful anger for the way she had treated me. I then accepted my anger only to see it evaporate, and with me feeling freer than before.

More Wood Plucked From My Eyes Or Conscience:

For me a very precious truth that I embraced after I rededicated my life to God in 1989 was: “When it comes to God judging anyone; He won’t expect from any person anything

that they didn't already know or hear about in this life." After I went through most of my Dark Journey, I gradually lost sight of this truth that God judges every person by his or her own conscience (not mine). Since I can't see each person's conscience, I have no absolute certainty about his or her destiny. If God can forgive me, then why can't He forgive anyone else? God is merciful. Often people don't know what they themselves believe. What one knows and believes can be very tricky things to measure by another person: only God knows for absolute certainty where each of us stands. God at the end of one's life to determine one's place in the after life weighs what one knew, believed, and did. This is God's prerogative, not mine; He alone can read one's conscience; not me a fallen fallible human being.

I am allowed to have my theories about the Final Judgment but I can't make any absolute decrees, judgments or condemnations concerning anyone's destiny. I don't know anyone else's heart and mind for absolute certainty. I am flawed when I observe, think, desire, and I have limited experiences. The final judgment belongs to God. I am commanded by God to love, not criticize, hate, or judge.

Eventually God showed me that I couldn't condemn someone to Hell without hardening my heart and usurp God's position as Judge. God showed me that I had condemned a religious leader and another leader/philosopher in the past and that I had no business doing so. When I repented from this my unloving disposition towards their followers dissolved too. A key to coming to these conclusions was for me to embrace and meditate on Jesus and His Passion. I also found new life when I accepted that no one else needed to live according to my conscience. Coming to these conclusions and changing my attitudes was a process. This process is still not finished.

Later God would show me that all the good and truth found in other non-Christian Religions was something I needed to accept and affirm. When I did, I no longer saw other Religions as counterfeits and completely wicked. I no longer saw them as a threat to Christianity. I no longer saw people who adhered to these non-Christian Religions as enemies. This was a major step for me being able to love others from different faith backgrounds. What a relief. PRAISE GOD!

Focusing On Grace Not The Law:

For a long time now I have been meditating on what it means to abide in Jesus because I have come to believe that this is the key to doing God's will. I now realize that I was still committed to rolling up my sleeves and foremost following God's Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount in my own energy until the Holy Spirit pointed it out to me. I am certain that focusing on the Law is not the way to bear good fruit. I have beat myself up over and over again by focusing on the Law. The law by itself is merciless; whatever you give is not enough to satisfy it. Earlier this morning (December 18, 2007) I read part of the book of Romans. My friend Dan is correct, if I don't focus on sin, or if I don't focus on not sinning, then it will go away by itself. Jesus is the Light of the world. Jesus is the source of life. If I want to live fruitfully I can't compartmentalize my prayer life. If I do then huge portions of each day will be devoid of God's presence, purpose, and peace. And Jesus won't be the focus of my life. I uphold the moral law (which is to love) not by focusing on it but by abiding in Jesus. Shifting from law to abiding in Jesus is not easy because our old approach to living life is so ingrained. Shifting from abiding in

Jesus to focusing on the law is very easy to do. We want to be in control and having and keeping rules gives us the illusion that we are in control. Thank you for this revelation O Holy Spirit.

Self-righteousness occurs when we attempt to be righteous through our own efforts and energy and not by following Jesus in faith and receiving His grace and power to do His will.

Resting has to do with giving up the pressures we put on ourselves to do good things in our own energy (letting Jesus relieve me from unhelpful burdens). When we do things Jesus' way then peace and resting in Him is what results. Jesus does not put pressure on us; His way is not burdensome. Jesus does not expect us to follow Him by us putting pressure on ourselves to follow Him either.

Even though I realized these things on the surface I was blind to deep within where I was depending on the Law to keep me from sinning. The New Testament says that the power of sin is in the Law. It would take time for God to give me this revelation, and set me free from my bondage thoroughly.

Revisiting Anger:

Well I think that I am re-learning old lessons... ever be it slowly. I need to embrace my ANGER and not attempt to suppress and control it like I have been doing recently. For some reason I have had the impression that when I enter into the freedom to love like God promised me that all my anger would disappear. And so subconsciously I have been attempting to repress my anger only to make me angrier with self and frustrated because of my lack of progress. And as a result I have gotten angrier with others more than I ought to be. I need to EMBRACE my anger whenever things don't go my way; not repress it. And that may happen more often than I like. Honestly I don't know how to handle my anger in healthy ways at this time.

Romans 12:1 says my mind needs to be renewed. I can't aim at holiness in my own energy. I need to be myself. I need to rest in Jesus. Becoming holy is a lifetime process. There is always more to learn and grow up into.

Living In The Present:

Gradually God made me aware that the only way for me to be aware of what is going on inside of me is for me to live in the present. For me at this juncture this is a difficult thing to do. Imagine a heavily loaded train that has gathered up so much speed and momentum... that it will take time to slow it down. That train is I. If one is daydreaming about the future and lives in and for the future one will never experience the future when it becomes the present. One will be robbed of the future and the present. Jesus is in the present. If one is rushing off to get to the future one will be impatient with others who are presently in the way. When one abides fully in Jesus one will be living in the present: not the past and not the future. It is okay to think about the future every now and then, but we need to live in the present if we are to tackle and achieve what God has prepared for us to do. The ideal ought to be: we learn from the past, live in the present, and hope for the future.

When we are obsessed with the future we are blind to the present. We miss out on the present. Living in the present is where the real business gets done. My goal is to slow down and to enjoy every moment as each one arises. This is my challenge.

Rescued From A Rushing River By Jesus:

On February 19, 2008 I realized I was full of anxiety and during prayer I visualized myself being carried along figuratively in a powerful rushing river. I asked Jesus where He was and He appeared. I cried out to Him and He extended His hand to mine and drew me out of the raging water. I felt weak and rushed and asked Jesus to heal me. Strength left Jesus and entered into me and I felt much stronger. As time wore on I realized that I wasn't as rushed like I was before this healing prayer took place. I felt like a BIG BURDEN was removed from my shoulders. I felt much more at PEACE and able to live in the present. Thank you Jesus!

This visual prayer experience was meant as a prophesy meant to encourage me that eventually I would slow down as my mind was renewed and the lies I believed or assumed were challenged and washed away.

Inner Healing:

When I was very young. My parents left me behind with my Grandmother in South Africa and went with my sister to visit family in Europe. I am sure that I did wonder why my family left me, that I felt some rejection, and I felt it was my fault that Mom left me behind. I do have a memory of us reuniting at the Airport when they returned home. I know as an adult that it wasn't my fault that I was left behind, and that I didn't have to punish myself for what happened back then. But for a long time I felt blocked when it came to developing relationships after they got started. The question I eventually had was: Does me sabotaging relationships (through paralysis) after each beginning have to do with abandonment issues related to this early childhood memory/event of mine? I came to the conclusion that yes they did. I came realize that I don't have to sabotage any of my relationships anymore. I didn't have to worry about being rejected anymore. I could take the pressure off myself to perform (in my relationships) with God's help and therefore let each relationship develop freely. I did not have to become paralyzed early in each relationship waiting for people to abandon me like I expected them to. God was there all along. After I prayed through this issue I saw my mother in a more wholesome/ affectionate/healthy/and pleasing way. I also felt free from the paralysis I fell into so often that prevented so many of my relationships from developing further.

Straightening Out The Gospel I believed In:

Eventually God led me to explore the teachings I found in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Scott Hahn's writings regarding "Atonement" and Jesus' "PASSION" and suffering on the cross. In my Protestant days I came to believe that God vented His anger for me and my sins on His Son Jesus so that He could forgive me my sins. I jettisoned this belief much later on but was at a loss on how to approach this subject until I got a book called, "Stricken By God?" that was edited by Brad Jersak, and that went in depth into this issue. As I began to read it I realized that I had been very hasty, rushed, and sloppy in interpreting certain Scriptures dealing with this issue. As the truth became more evident to me, I found that I also began to see God differently, and moreover I began to see those who offended Him differently too. This was one part of the puzzle. The next part was:

Freedom From Myself & Therefore More Love For Others:

Sometime ago on March 3, 2008 or earlier, I had a dream before I woke up in the morning. In the dream I saw a robot with a red glow coming from its chest or head. It looked strong, in control, and on a mission. There was some talk between it and someone else regarding its “real” mission. I felt drawn to this robot. The next thing I knew I saw it struggling to remain alive as it was strapped to some contraption meant to destroy it. It did not want to die as it struggled to overcome its situation... but the apparatus it was attached to made it a shadow of its former self. It was weak, broken, dented, scratched, and deformed; yet it remained a live... intent on fulfilling its mission.... That was the dream.

At first I was perplexed on how to interpret the dream, but I later came to believe that the dream was from God meant to encourage me. I would later on come to see that the Robot was that part of myself that followed rules, principles, maxims, and ideas ruthlessly and not in the intended gentle way. The robot symbolized my idea of perfection. This perfection was grotesque: it was what I thought a Saint was like. The robot also represented a part of my heart that was dead, devoid of moisture and life. My heart and mind would have to be renewed. Thankfully God would show me what was what later on.

Moving From Judging To Interceding For Mercy:

Gradually my internal attitudes towards others changed for the better. I became even more aware about what Jesus means when He said for us not to judge or condemn others. I am no longer an expert when it comes to who will or won't make it into Heaven like U2's song, “Original Of The Species” warns us from becoming expert in.

Not judging and condemning others, and instead loving them where they are at has opened my eyes and changed the way I see how a righteous person expresses love. Instead of seeing plenty of anger (or hatred) behind certain messages found in Scripture, I now see sadness, tears, compassion, hurt, and a plea for God's mercy to be granted. What's more is that I see a little more of the latter within myself instead of the self-righteousness, hard-heartedness, and the blind judging I fell into so often in the past. I am not happy with where I am at this time... but progress is being made.

Taking Stock Of Where I'm At:

It has been 16 years since I became ill with schizophrenia. And it has been 8 years since God removed the first impurity from my heart and mind. Renewing the mind; removing evil roots and demonic strongholds is a slow process. One can't rush this process as someone told me not too long ago. Life involves many learning curves. We are all on journeys. And I do see progress as God continues to remove much of the wickedness from my heart and mind.

Here is a list of stuff that came to the surface recently in my relationships with others, and that I listed in my Fearless Moral Inventory:

- I wanted to people please. People pleasing is not the same as loving others. The motives are different. The former is done from weakness and fear whereas the latter is from wanting the best for people.
- I was still way too hard on others and myself. This stems from my pride (I don't know the roots at this time). This manifested as me putting pressure on myself. i.e.) I was very impatient with myself and others.

- I was very judgmental towards people and see things in others that are not necessarily there (don't know the roots at this time).
- I was rushed and didn't give a "damn" about what other peoples' needs were.
- I was short tempered.
- I was selfish.
- I was lazy.
- I was manipulative. I often say things to impress rather than to bless others.

Baby Steps:

A dear friend of mine named Sophie encouraged me to take "baby steps" in attacking life's opportunities and my relationships. And because she shared her wisdom, I had one of those priceless moments when I finally realized how to take baby steps. Put Sophie's way... a wave made it all the way up the beach and deposited some life giving nutrients into my heart.

One can't put out the fire by grasping at the smoke. One needs to deal with the flames. For a long time I was attempting to control or repress my feelings thinking that this would be the way to slow myself down. I knew that our walk is by faith not by sight (or feelings with the aim to be gratified)... but I could not slow down like wanted to. The key (I now realize) is in controlling my actions and taking tiny baby, or small steps (or actions) like Sophie repeatedly told me to do. When I caught on... I had such peace and wasn't rushed throughout each day. Actions cause feelings; rarely do feelings cause good actions... although they can.

Finding More Humility & Freedom:

I had learned a long time ago that there are four levels of staying away from sin with increasing nobility. They are:

1. Fear of Hell
2. Fear of guilt
3. Loving our neighbor
4. Loving God

Today, on Wednesday August 20, 2008 I realized that I expected my best friend Sophie to operate at level 4 instead of level 3 on a certain issue, while I thought I was operating at level 4 on that same issue but was only operating at levels 1 and 2. That was humbling to me. It brought freedom to me as I became more conscious of where I stood in the moral realm. It also allowed me to grow in my love for Sophie. I now know that I had a judgmental and demanding spirit... and that God had to show me even more just how noble Sophie is. Thank you Sophie for your love of God and me!

A Revelation About Love:

There are two polar extremes when it comes to relating to others. The First extreme: those who try to motivate themselves because God commands them to do this or that; and the other extreme: those who motivate themselves purely by not wanting to hurt others. The latter when left all to itself is self-righteous humanism, and the former leads to dead legalism. Both are empty of super-natural love when devoid of each other. To have real super-natural love both are needed. By this I mean we need anointed understanding of what God actually commands us to do.

Because of my relationship with my dear friend Sophie, I came to realize that God says certain things are wrong because they hurt us or don't benefit us in the long run. I know that I was the kind of person who wanted to be motivated by God and not humans and so often fell into legalism and insensitivity. I also realized that I was committed to obeying rules or commandments given by God but when situations occurred that did not fit the rules exactly I would fail to love (this happened all the time). I also failed to respect humans the way God designed them to be respected (because they are made in God's image) and therefore failed to love them the way God intends because I was too focused on only pleasing God and His Laws. I guess that this is one of the lessons about the Parable of Good Samaritan found in Luke 10. I saw humans to be in the way of my love or more to the point: nuisances. Because I did not respect my fellow humans the way I ought to, I could not love them individually. Those who truly love God will love their neighbors and vice versa.

God does not give us abstract rules to follow to test to see if we want to follow Him. There are enough temptations in this life to test us and let us know what is in each of our hearts. God delights in love not blind devotion. Blind devotion is rooted in a mistaken-fear-based perception of who God is. As if God were overly demanding, capricious or fickle. God desires the good of all He has created. He is generous, compassionate, joyful, and loving; and wants us to participate in His love. He says things because they are true, and because of the way He has designed us humans to live. We need to focus on each other's humanity and not be blind to each other's needs and weaknesses. Love views reality properly: it sees the BIG picture (like Sophie likes to say). It does not see other humans as being in the way of love in the bad sense. It sees them and wants to love them. It does not see them as being another burden to carry. It also tough loves those who need to grow up. Love is not legalism. Love is freedom! Thank you Sophie. You are a real treasure.

What Really Unites Us:

For a long time I saw agreement on all doctrines, ideas, judgments, and truth important to me as the foundation for true unity and acceptance and security in my relationships. Problem is that we all see things a little differently from each other on so many topics or issues. Moreover the lingo, meanings, terminology, and definitions we pour into words may differ at times too. No one will find rest, security and trust for long if they are seeking unity based on everyone agreeing on an ever-growing list of truths. When it comes to relationships between men and women what motivates us and how we measure things differ significantly. Security can only be found in living out a commitment to loving each other the way Jesus loves us. Jesus' love for us is unconditional (we can't earn it; we are saved by grace, and mercy). Truth is important, but what I see as truth has and will change over the years. True some truths can't be negotiated... but that does not mean we need to be anal. Also if we demand agreement on truth for unity, our love will very likely become conditional. If some one disagrees with us, we might see them as an enemy, or we may just be un-loving and judgmental towards them. This goes against all Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

Dealing With A Selfish Attitude & Insensitivity:

As a child I was a very jealous person. And since I never dealt with this attitude it grew within me and I even became blind to it and embraced it. When I shared with my mental health therapist the revelation I had about the polar extremes (mentioned above): Doing things because God commands them vs. not doing anything that might hurt somebody. She made a remark that hit home. I don't know the exact words she said anymore. But I realized that I needed to repent from my selfishness. When I did, my tolerance increased substantially. And I became much more loving. I was certain that I needed to deal with this regularly until it became natural to not go there anymore. I was wrong. Again selfishness is a fruit (if you pick it off it will grow back); one needs to deal with its roots for it to go away. I did not know what its root was.

On Wednesday September 17, 2008, I realized that I was bottlenecking some of my compassion within my heart by a judgmental spirit or attitude within me that started when I was very young. I realized that deep within me I had decided that I would not mourn or laugh with those going through tough or joyous times because I had judged everyone as not worthy of that response. I did this because my peers rejected me on the playgrounds. I felt judged as not worthy, so I judged them as not worthy. I repented from this in faith... but the insensitivity returned anyways. What was at the bottom of this I had no idea. Thankfully God would later put His finger on its roots later.

Moving From Being Hard On Self To Loving Myself & Therefore Others:

I am learning that if I am hard on others it is because I am hard on myself. If I push myself in one area, I'll be pushing others in the same area. If I am judgmental towards others then it is because I am judgmental towards myself. If I put pressure on myself I will put pressure on others. If I am impatient with myself then I'll be impatient with others. If I expect perfection from self I will expect perfection from everyone else. If I am expecting perfection from others it is because I expect perfection from myself. If I am hard on others it is because I am hard on myself. If I stop being hard on myself, then I won't be hard on others too. If you are critical of others it is because you are critical of yourself. This comes from the saying: "If you don't love yourself, you won't be able to love others." This comes from Jesus command for us to love our neighbor as ourselves. If we judged ourselves a certain way, that will block our love for others in the same way. This revelation has freed me to love myself and therefore other people more deeply. PTL!

Often I find that I don't manage certain personal issues by myself well. But now I have re-learned that I can give those things to God to carry for me when I can't manage those things by myself. He invites us to come to Him. Freedom starts with "I want to", not "I should do".

Aiming At Love, Not Just Feelings:

After this I wrongly thought that if I just felt certain emotions within then everything would be OK. So I attempted to fabricate such emotions. This did not work. So much of my journey has to do with learning old lessons from slightly new perspectives over and over again. Love does not seek it's own. We don't aim to feel warm fuzzy emotions that will motivate us to love. We aim to love whether or not we feel warm fuzzy emotions. For a long time I saw certain emotions as evil and therefore sinful. But now I realize that they aren't necessarily sinful even if they are bad. Emotions, desires, and feelings are

not necessarily sinful. Actions are sinful, or righteous or a mixture of the two. I now know that I am responsible for my actions alone. I need to focus on my actions and trust that God will deal away with my bad feelings with my cooperation in His time. Before this I was overwhelmed with wrestling my emotions. I would get drawn into, worry about, and feel guilty for all the uncharitable feelings I felt towards others while interacting with them. It was too BIG a burden to carry. And my schizophrenia made things worse.

My friend Alex Pruss set things straight for me when I asked him about this issue: "Sin always involves a choice and an action. If we choose to not obey a bad desire then we are actually doing a good thing even though we experience a bad desire. We need to worry more about what we do than about what we feel. Eventually with God's help the feelings and desires may become better, but what we are judged for is whether these actions are loving or not."

Realizing that I only have to focus on my actions, and not my feelings has been liberating for me. Now I am able to stand up for myself and put my thoughts forward in an assertive manner while not feeling weak and overwhelmed with all my emotions within when conflicts arise between others and me. Thank you Alex! Thank you Almighty God, Amen!

"Wanting" Versus "Ought To":

This is an interesting topic that continues to be revisited by me in my journey through this life. Having learned that feelings and desires can't be sinful and that only choices and actions can be sinful... God showed me that attitudes could be sinful. One attitude in me that went against mercy, grace, gentleness and compassion was the belief that I needed to focus on the "ought to" when it comes to keeping God's commands no matter what. This attitude of "ought to" was misguided because the commandments became the focus not Jesus. This bad attitude erased my depending on Jesus via faith and trust that He would lead and help me to do His will day and night. It was rather the self-righteous, dutiful, because it was right, whip driven, harsh, dependent on my own resources attitude that was at work within me that I was attempting to use to motivate myself to do God's will. What an awful burden to carry.

I now know that Jesus wants us to trust Him (moment to moment) with our lives, our actions, our choices, and the weight of doing the right things at the right time. That is what it means to walk by faith, abide in Him, rest in Him, and to achieve His will. Any other way is too burdensome. Any other way puts pressure on me and evaporates the joy God intended for me to experience day and night. I truly want to do God's will and so I will trust Him to will and to act in me to perform His hearts desires day and night. I don't want to sin: I don't want to commit adultery, fornicate, steal, hate, murder, envy, and worship false gods. I will trust God with my path. I am not going to motivate myself with I "ought to" because I really "want to" do God's will. The "I ought to" motivation is a slave attitude, whereas the "I want to" is the motivation of a mature child who knows she or he is loved by God.

A New Approach:

Eventually I realized that I was on another "hunt, seek and repent" mission. I realized that if there was sin in my life then I needed to let God point out what it was. Because

for so long as I was focused on possible dirty laundry in my life the devil would because of my schizophrenia drag me from one dirty ditch to another making me feel shitty, loathsome, guilty, frustrated, and angry. God is in charge of my holiness. I just need to focus on being myself; trust God that He will lead, with me resting in Jesus.

Moving From Law To Grace Based Relationships:

In the past I used to approach my relationship with God in more of a "law"-based manner than a "grace"-based manner. When I sinned gravely I would be very hard on myself and approach the confessional as a court of law not recognizing that God loved me dearly and actually wanted to forgive me and restore me to Him self. A priest once said to me while I was in the confessional: "This is not a court of law." At the time I did not know what he meant. But later on I would see that I was "law"-based more than "grace"-based in my attitudes. I used to see God's love as conditional. I felt that I could only be right with God if I went without sin for a reasonable period of time. I saw God as a distant Judge or master and me as a bad slave or criminal when I sinned gravely. Then I received an email from my girlfriend Sophie that made me see this "law"-based approach of mine for the first time [Thanks Sophie].

Those people who are parents and know God tend to see their relationships with God in the same way as they view their relationships with their children. While dealing with considerable guilt a little while ago, I began to see that a "grace"-based relationship is one where one views God as a loving and forgiving father and me as His cherished child. A parent loves one's children no matter how they behave, and often forgive them before the children seek forgiveness. "Grace"-based relationships with God are where we are secure in His love and we celebrate God's Fatherhood, and our daughter-hood or son-ship with Him. We also celebrate our bond with our close Brother Jesus who made it possible to be adopted into God's family.

Now there is plenty of truth in God being a Judge... with Him passing laws or judgments on all sorts of moral matters and dispensing mercy or condemnations to those who break those laws. But "grace"-based relationships are more secure because our relationships with Him are closer, warmer, stronger, richer, and more hopeful. We need to focus on having a "grace"-based relationship rather than a 'law'-based relationship. When we have a "grace"-based relationship with God we behave towards and see our relationships with God like we are a family. And that is who we are after we are saved. We see that God cares for us. We see that He is compassionate, intensely loyal, willing to conquer death to save us and be with us. We don't view God as a distant, cold, strict, authoritarian Judge who strips Himself of any link (or affection) with us each time after we sin until we conform to His standards yet again.

I would later realize that if we are foremost rolling up our sleeves and focusing on the Law to keep us from sin then we will sin often and gravely when opportunities present themselves. The power of sin is in the Law. The power of love is in grace. If we are Law focused we will see God as Judge and not a loving Father.

A long time ago I realized that God is not petty. He did not try to turn every tiny sin or proud attitude of mine into an opportunity to humble me or show me my place. He was and is gracious towards me. Now I know that when I commit grave sins that God wants with everything within Himself to have me reconciled to Him ASAP. God is gracious no

matter what. In the Old Testament Times sin was covered by blood. In the New Testament Times sin is taken away. God just does not only want to take away our guilt He wants to remove the sinful attitudes and actions from our ways of life too. Pleasing a loving father is much easier than pleasing a Judge. If we view God, the Judge of the world, as rightly icy-cold, distant, and unaffectionate when it comes to infractions of His law of love then we will do likewise to others when they hurt us. More needs to be said [Thanks Dan]: There are consequences to our sinful actions. We can hurt others, and others can hurt us and so divide us. Jesus being the Good Shepherd will discipline us when required. And we may need to make amends to those we hurt when made aware of our infractions. If we are caught in some serious sin, then God who is a loving Father will not approve of it and will require of us to follow Him out of it. Remember to take “baby steps”. “Grace”-based relationships don’t mean that we don’t feel guilt when we sin. Guilt shouldn’t be rationalized away, suppressed, or taken lightly. If we feel terrible because of certain actions, then that guilt should take us to God who can then start the process of reconciliation/healing/forgiveness/and movement to freedom.

Moving Into Freedom:

Every time I realized that I had judged somebody wrongly, I felt joy after I repented and proceeded to run forward to the freedom awaiting me only to get all tangled up within myself. I then realized that I was running ahead of Jesus and that I had to wait for Him to lead me forward from where I last experienced His freedom. I further realized that after I repented from, “judging others” I would proceed forward wrongly thinking that there were some possible nebulous hidden exceptions. There aren’t any. I began to perceive that my theology was too complicated, and that I needed to proceed forward as simply as possible just like my mental health worker Marilyn told me to do a little while back. Any theology that a child can’t understand can be a cause for pride, misunderstanding, quarrels, deception, and separation from God’s will, grace and power. And that was the case with me without me realizing it for the longest time. I was like the Pharisee praying in the Temple judging the tax collector a stone’s throw away. That was not a good place for me to be. Thankfully God is merciful to all including me.

When I asked myself what the Gospel was in the simplest terms possible: I came to the conclusion that it was summed up in the two words: “Forgiveness” and “Love.”

Everything began to slow down for me. I began to feel more at peace. I felt humbled. I felt I had room to maneuver within. I realized that in keeping things simple other people would understand me more easily

Learning That I’ll Never Have It all Figured Out:

Sure, part of the puzzle to life is that the Gospel is about forgiveness, but there are many more questions to life and how to live it. I now realize that I’ll never figure it all out or come to one maxim that solves all my problems. If I stop asking questions I’ll stop growing, I won’t have any challenges, and will think that I know it all. That will make me pompous, proud, and arrogant. Life is a mystery. Universal Love does not become particular love if it does not seek to learn how to love those who cross our paths each day. I am now focusing on how to incorporate this insight into my life.

There Is A Season For Everything:

The next revelation I was given was the idea that all people are at all different stages of spiritual development, stagnation, or regression. Just because I come to certain revelations doesn't mean that others have to do so as well or are ready to do so. God has His timetable. When people become ready to move closer to God then God will send messengers that way, and then they are going to live out the truth revealed to them. And God will be with those seekers of truth shepherding them in the process. God might use me or He might not. In fact He can use anyone of any creed or persuasion directly or indirectly. God can do whatever he sets His mind to do.

Discovering That I am Still A Hypocrite:

After long thought, reflection, and new insight I came to the conclusion that I had hypocrisy in my life: some BIG and some small stuff and so could not justify the words: "God had led me to a true un-hypocritical life style" in the introduction to this essay. I am a work in progress, I am a student, and I am a learner when it comes to practicing love, faith, hope, humility, and tolerance towards others. Thank you Lord God for all the life, hope, and joy I experience in my journey through this life. Amen, and Amen!