TO BE BROKEN INTO FREEDOM:

A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

(Draft no. 335)

A VERY IMPORTANT APOLOGY TO ALL:

Having been a mess morally speaking most my life I have hurt many people as my path crossed that of others. I am sorry for having hurt those I have hurt through my insensitivity, stupidity, abrasiveness, clumsiness, anger, and pride. Those people whom I hurt I did wrong to. I can only pray that you will forgive me some time in the future. I am sorry, very sorry for hurting those I did!
Sincerely,
Rene Lafaut

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THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

To all who have stood by me through my trials, I want to give thanks to you. Instruments of God as you are, He has used you to save me from destruction, by your prayers, wise advice, thoughtfulness, encouragement, sacrifices, and care for me. My prayer is that God and myself will remember your deeds for eternity. Thanks! Great thanks to you all!
In particular, I want to give thanks to those who edited different versions of this manuscript. Especially, my friends Alex Pruss, and Chris Brion, my godmother Anita Patel, and my sister Desirée Lafaut.
I also want to thank those who challenged my misguided views in many of their forms. Included in this group are Alex Angioli, Dr. Alex Pruss, Marilyn Leonard, Dan Huget and Desirée Lafaut.
Lastly, I thank you my God for coming to my rescue in my deep darkness, and suffering. No other god came to my distress – none other was my protector. Truly you are the great hope of all who are poor in spirit. May I spread your renown. May I praise you in all I do. May I honor you as you deserve, and glorify your heart of radiant beauty, with all my heart, strength, and ability. May I make you known to all I meet. Great praise and thanksgiving belong to you forever and ever!

I dedicate this book to my beloved wife Sophie and the rest of
my family- who believed in me even when things seemed hopeless.
I dedicate this book to
Anita Patel, Dr. Alex Pruss & Dan Huget - whose love and wisdom helped me
to overcome much adversity and confusion.
I dedicate this book to
Dr. Philip Loewen - my former Ph.D. supervisor who was
deprived of seeing me write a second mathematical thesis.
I also dedicate this book to
all those suffering from mental illness
in any of its forms.

Real isn't how you are made," said the skin horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become Real."
"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.
"Sometimes" said the skin horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are real you don't mind being hurt."
"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"
"It doesn't happen all at once," said the skin horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or have been carefully kept. Generally by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been rubbed off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

From The Velveteen Rabbit.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

When I first renewed my Christian walk, I came to believe that I would never experience sorrow to the degree that I had previously. I was wrong! In fact I was wrong about a lot of things. Up until then I had an easy life. I knew very little about practicing faith, hope, love, and humility. During my Dark and troubled Journey, I would come to a deeper understanding and practice of these virtues by learning to hold onto my promise from God for me to be broken into Freedom.

In this brief story, I have kept away from most of the problems I encountered with the unreasonableness of my former world-view, in case you are going through what I experienced. You will have enough problems of your own. The real issue – "can I trust in God's goodness?" – I did not leave out, because it was central to me growing up in the faith. All other issues were an outgrowth of this main issue.

In this book, when I use the words dark or darkness, I mean chaos, disorder, or confusion unless otherwise indicated. With them I try to convey a lacking of the comforts normally associated with feeling God's presence. This kind of darkness has to do with blind spots, or bends in the road; hence the need for faith in and commitment to the truth to navigate through it. This darkness is accompanied with testing, weakness, and temptation. This kind of darkness isn't evil in itself; instead, it's the machinery that God uses to make souls alive to His grace if they persevere.

The Journey described in this story is divided into five stages:

- The first period started in March of 1992 and lasted until December of the same year. It was my introduction to the severity of God's discipline in my life.

- The second period started in January of 1993, and lasted until August of the same year. It involves my march towards desolation and diagnosis. It was bitter sweet.

- The third period started in September of 1993 and ended in May of 2001. This period marks part of the road to recovery. It was by far the most difficult and darkest to navigate through.

- The fourth period started on May 1, 2001 and ended around May 2009. It marks the gradual return to the land of the living. It involves leaving behind the major bends in the road that had tested my faith.

- The last period began around late May 2009 and continues into 2016 (well past the twentieth anniversary of having mental illness). During this period I got married to a wonderful lady named Sophie, and God dislodged the BIGGEST blocks I had towards loving others. Most of the negative symptoms from my MAJOR mental illness became manageable. I experience a wide range of emotions that before were impossible for me to do for lengthy periods of time. I expect to grow in my ability to express love from here onwards. It keeps getting better each and every day. I am glad I waited for God to move: gradually, gradually, gradually and then finally all of a sudden. I am glad I never gave up!

It has been commented that in the early going this book gets a bit heavy. This is true; when suffering takes place it is not a light subject. Yet, I hope that the reader will persevere. Some might think that suffering of any kind cannot be justified for any reason, and that the reasons I provide to motivate my suffering in the opening chapters are insufficient. Once you get to the chapter entitled From Darkness Into The Light you may begin to think differently!

It has also been commented that I appear to be too hard on myself through most of the events that are recorded in this book. I admit that I was very hard on myself before my Dark Night or Journey and for some time in it, but as God continues to purify me I find this attitude becoming less and less of an issue.

A word of caution before you begin to read: Many of the events, circumstances, and abstract symptoms described in this book, can be viewed in a myriad of ways. It is my hope that you will be patient and slow to close your mind to the explanations I give for them. Looking along a ray of light in a dark tool shed is different than looking at the ray sideways when it reflects off the dust in the same tool shed. During my Dark Journey, I questioned whether the hand of God, the demonic, my illness, my environment, my medication, my body, my spirit, or some combination of these caused certain events that I witnessed. Many times I was mystified as to what caused what.

It may appear while reading this manuscript that I point to a reality or unreality but do not fully describe it to the satisfaction of some. Describing color to a blind person, or sound

to a deaf person is just as difficult.
Note: I use the words "spirit" or "soul" interchangeably when it comes to the non-physical part of a human's makeup. With them I mean, "the complex of human attributes that manifests as consciousness, thought, feeling, and will, regarded as distinct from the physical body."[1]
All the events written about in this Manuscript are true to the best of my knowledge. I have written down my experiences as accurately as I could remember them. Since my memory can play tricks on me, there may be some errors. I might also be off on some of the dates by a few weeks here and there. As far as my theology is concerned: if I contradict the Traditional Interpretations of the Bible anywhere within this manuscript, I am wrong. I am most grateful for the gift of the Bible and encouragement found there in. Also, the later the version of this manuscript that one reads the better. With each version I have attempted to weed out errors in my theology, and to correct my wording so that hopefully others won't misunderstand me.
Finally the reason I have written down my experiences is to inspire others going through difficult times to draw courage from them, and therefore persevere. If I can make it through deep and humbling waters with God's grace, so can you. My prayer is, "that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints."[2]

Chapter 2

SNAPSHOTS FROM THE EARLY YEARS

As a small child I grew up in what was then Apartheid South Africa, and eventually immigrated to Canada in 1976. There are many memories from which I could choose. Here are some that I'd like to share with you.

My First Communion:

On the day that I was to participate in my First Communion, all dressed in white, I remember the Priest asking us children some questions about the faith in front of the whole congregation. I eagerly raised my hands and on two occasions was asked to give answers to certain questions. The only question I now remember being asked was: Where is God? I of course answered correctly. But when it was time for me to receive my First Communion, there had been a mix up in the paper work, and so I could not participate in it like the other children until a little while later. I would later see this event as God's way of saying that He knew all along that I would later part take in an authentic relationship with Him.

A Would Be Peace Maker:

I was a happy boy for the most part, but also a loner on the play field at recess. At the end of each recess a bell rang, and we were all expected to line up in front of our home classrooms. One warm day, the bell rang, and most of the kids started to line up except a

[1] Encarta ® World English Dictionary © 1999 Microsoft Corporation
[2] Ephesians 1:18

few who were wrestling on the lawn nearby. As I watched I saw the principal far off walking towards the kids that were wrestling. Wanting to spare my playmates from getting into trouble, I decided to break up the fight and proceeded to divide and warn the combatants. We all quickly got into the line up as the principle was upon us. But the principal had seen me break up the wrestling match, and so got a hold of me by my leg, and held me upside down as he slapped me a number of times on the bum to discipline me. I definitely did not like what he was doing, thinking that I had done a good deed in breaking up the fight.

After the incident, I remember thinking to myself that if only I had of had a knife in my pocket when the principal was slapping me. My hope was that he would stab himself upon the knife while he spanked me. I guess that I was very unrealistic back then, and I do see things differently now. I would not want the principal to stab himself on a knife in my pocket for such a small thing such as a spanking that may or may not have been deserved on my part.

A Would Be Curser:

As a child we used to live on a dead end street in a town called Springs in South Africa. Most of the families on our short street had children about my age. Most were English speaking and went to the same school. One day as I found myself at the entrance of our street I came across two groups of kids – one English (British Descendants), and the other Afrikaans (Dutch descendants). They were calling each other names. One of the English kids invited me to call the Afrikaans kids names. Even though my mother was of Dutch origin, I did so loudly, loyally and with much zeal. I used the African word for "fuck you" which was "footsack" and called them "Afrikaners that are bad bananas" in Afrikaans. As you can see the swear words have similarities, and my taunt also rhymes. As I participated the Afrikaans kids left…and I felt very disappointed that the fun was coming to an end so quickly. But there would be many other opportunities.

A Second Attempt At Being A Curser:

As a part of our school activities, the best athletes from all the surrounding schools would compete in races at the local stadium somewhere in the district that we lived in. Those kids that did not participate (like myself) sat up in the stands and cheered their respective school teams on. Only problem was that I saw this as an opportunity to continue the cursing and swearing at the Afrikaners like I did above. I started shouting out (as loud as I could) all the foul things I could think of at the Afrikaners. A very short while later an adult came over and sternly told me to stop it. This never to the best of my memory re-occurred as we left for Canada not long afterwards.

On Having My Bubble Of Pride Burst:

This was my day. Ever since I tasted leadership in Cubs as a section leader I had begun to hunger for more. When I knew that the next step was Scouts I knew that I wanted the challenge. After wining the Cub of the year trophy I felt really good about myself. Imagine, "I-WAS-VOTED-CUB-OF-THE-YEAR." It started going to my head. Not that I was overly proud in a bad way yet. It was just that my pride was beginning to grow. "Can I please join the Scouts next year Dad?" I had pleaded many times that year. At the end of the Cub year I had even proudly told the adult Cub leaders my plans and they had seemed to rejoice with me.

And this was the day.

This was my day.

Years later I couldn't remember anything else about that day except the events that transpired that night at the Scout meeting my parents took me to.
I was full of happiness and excitement as my Dad dropped me off at the Kings' Men Hall in the town of Devon that we lived in somewhere in Alberta.
I felt this was my day, smiling to myself and thinking, "I made it to the Scouts! Yes…oh boy! Only good things can happen from here onwards." I took big confident steps into the old hall, and almost ran to where the adult Scout leaders stood talking amongst themselves. Even before I had the attention of the closest adult my mouth was open with a confident look of glee.
"Hi, my name is RENÉ, and I spent SEVEN YEARS in Cubs." That wasn't really true. I had only spent about three years in Cubs. But to my mind it sounded better to say, "I spent SEVEN YEARS in Cubs."
They all looked at me and nodded to show that they understood. They welcomed me, and then seemed to ignore me. None of them looked upon my credentials and me the way I wanted or expected them to. So thinking that they had not heard and understood, I tried to clear away the confusion and repeated the last part of my last sentence with more emphasis: "I SPENT SEVEN YEARS IN CUBS!" I looked with hope into the faces that stared at me.
But all they did was nod and softly and insensitively tell me to join the other boys scattered about. I almost began to pout as I realized that they weren't as nearly impressed with my credentials as I was. Didn't they see that I was SCOUT OF THE YEAR MATERIAL? Shouldn't I tell them I was CUB OF THE YEAR? I was confused, but decided to make the best of it and introduce myself to the other boy Scouts. Maybe they would see me in a better light. Clearly I thought without any doubt that they would naturally, sooner or later, begin to see my LEADERSHIP abilities.
As the night progressed we were divided into groups or sections that were asked to choose leaders and assistant leaders. I tried to become the leader but a more popular kid got voted in instead. I started to pout, but one of the boys tried to cheer me up with the possibility of being an assistant. I brightened up, put my name forward, but another boy was chosen instead of me. I was heart broken. I went home that night sobbing and pouting how unfair life could be.
On the way home, I met an older boy named Perry Franks, and I naturally sought consolation from him. But he gave me none. Instead he sinisterly asked me: "Do you believe in God?" I said that I did. He then tried to manipulate me into seeing that God was unfair and not worthy of being loyal to. I did not like where this kid was coming from and declared even more loudly that I believed in my God and went on my way nursing my hurt pride.
After awhile it did not matter to me that I was not section leader and I enjoyed my years as a scout anyways.

A Would Be Backslider:

Years later in my teens, I remember putting forth an argument to my Dad that His God was not necessarily my god, and basically concluding that I did not need to go to church with the family anymore. My Dad wisely said that I could have my way, but instead of going to church, he would give me garden work to complete while the rest of the family was at church. I hurriedly changed my mind wanting to avoid the work, and once again participated in Mass like I used to.

The Passing Passions of My Late Teens And Early Twenties:
As a young person I was caught up in the concerns of the popular culture of my day. I worshipped the opposite sex to the point of idolatry. I loved the free and righteous West, especially the Americans and hated those godless communists. I loved the weapons of war (especially those from the West). I loved Michael Jackson's music. I loved the Edmonton Oiler Hockey team to the point of worship and equally hated the Calgary Flames and the Montreal Canadians because I saw them as threats. In the summer I loved to play tennis and watch professionals like John McEnroe and Evan Lendl play it on TV. I was loyal to the Coke Classic soft drink and hated Pepsi Cola (and loved asking others what their opinion was on this very important matter). I loved mathematics and wanted to become either a math teacher in the school system or a professor in a college or university. These are the things that were important to me for some time. As you can see they were really serious (…LOL).

Part I

THE PROMISE

By faith Abraham, when called to go to the place
he would later receive as his inheritance,
obeyed and went, even though he did not know where
he was going. (Hebrews 11:8)

My child, if you aspire to serve the Lord,
prepare yourself for an ordeal.
(Ben Sira 2:1, Jerusalem Bible)

Chapter 3

PRIDE GOES BEFORE THE FALL

After I was born, I was baptized into the Christian faith. Because of this I was grafted into the true vine or the olive tree known as Jesus.[3] As I grew up I believed the Scriptures with the faith that was granted to me at my baptism. With the onset of puberty, I became like the prodigal son, dead in my trespasses, and separated from God in my sins. I never outright rejected or disowned Jesus with words, but my life was not orientated towards Him.
Later on in the summer of 1989, just before I started the M.Sc. program in mathematics at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, I rediscovered Jesus because of the prayers from my mother and father. It was a life-changing encounter with the Most High God, and it

[3] This is not a guarantee for final salvation. One can backslide, repent and believe, or fall away many times over.

filled me with joy and anticipation of good things to come. It was a high point in a life that I would describe as being rather ordinary up until then.

Shortly after deciding to follow Jesus, someone gave me a small red book to read called The Greatest Thing In The World. [4] Although I came to God because of His love for me, my motives for seeking God out had more to do with me wanting to love others than with me wanting to be loved. This little book inspired me to love, and so I began to dig down into my little heart to love people with my brand of love.

Having very little character (the ability, knowledge and willingness to love), my efforts to love did not last too long. At first, I tried reading the chapter on love in the Bible called First Corinthians 13 every day, but that got too difficult because I tried to force things too much. I approached love the same way I pursued other interests at the time: I pursued it with pressure, hardness, anger, ignorance, hatred, and being hard on myself: So I gave up quickly. Instead I decided to read the rest of the Bible. Unfortunately my motives to love slowly gave way to an empty desire to have a reputation of being knowledgeable.

I may have been a new creation because of my baptism, but years of living life on my own terms had wreaked havoc on my spiritual life. The emotional high point surrounding my conversion did motivate me for a while, but I could not sustain it – my heart was far too shallow.

At the end of the summer of 1991, I moved to Vancouver, BC to begin the Ph.D. program in mathematics at UBC. I was to study Optimization and Nonsmooth Analysis with Dr. Philip Loewen. I lived on Campus at a residence called VST, and met two special people, Michelle and Fran, who were to become good friends. I joined a Christian club on campus called University Christian Ministries (UCM), and started to attend an evangelical church called University Chapel. All were good influences in my life.

I was not happy in Vancouver, even if I did not admit it to myself at the time. I did not like Vancouver, and this contributed towards my desire for something new. The something 'new' did not appear until February in 1992 when I went to an Overflowing Grace conference, put on by University Chapel.

I saw the message from the conference as something new. It was not! Essentially, the message was that God's grace (His empowering presence) was available to the humble. But the problem was that my understanding of humility and pride were altogether unbiblical. I also wrongly believed that God's grace would make life easier, but with God's grace, more responsibilities and heavier crosses are inevitable with spiritual growth. So, I started to have a lot more pride because of my slant on these ideas. So much so that Jesus had to do something drastic about my situation. Otherwise He would have to spit me out of His mouth because of my pride. [5]

My pride showed up in a lack of love because love springs from humility. I don't want to give a full account of what sort of pride I had up until this time, because I didn't see it in myself until later on when God opened my eyes to it. For a detailed look at what my pride looked like before and after my Dark Journey see the chapter entitled, "From Darkness Into The Light."

Elbert Hubbard said, "The man who has no more problems to solve is out of the game."[6]

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[4] Henry Drummond, The Greatest thing in the World, World Bible Publishers, Inc.,

[5] Cf. Revelation 3:16

[6] Charlie Jones, Life is Tremendous, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. (1981), p. 105

We can't solve all our problems on earth at once. Yet this is what I wanted to do with what I learnt at the Overflowing Grace conference. I thought that all my struggling would disappear with God's grace – how foolish! We ought not to delight so much with increasing our knowledge, but rather in doing God's will. We think that the more knowledge we have the easier life will get. "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up."[7] If there are no struggles or efforts then chances are there is no love.
One of my favorite passages at the time was the following:

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable–if anything is excellent or praiseworthy–think about such things.[8]

Unfortunately, I was unaware of the true condition my heart was in at the time. Humility finds joy in the truth; truth tempered with mercy. It was so easy for me to bring a Bible verse like this to mind often, to find joy in it, to think that I agreed with it, but not do what it says. If you have never seen your own pride for what it is, like me, you will also fall into the danger of being a hypocrite. You will think that you are doing one thing when in reality you are doing the opposite. "So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!"[9]
I remember dismissing life in the ordinary sense of it. I wanted more – I still remember praying to God that I might become a martyr. I was really out to lunch; life is difficult enough as it is. I also wanted to be a modern day apostle. But my motives were wrong – I wanted to be recognized as an authority when it came to interpreting Scripture. If I had studied the lives of the New Testament apostles, I would have learnt that they had the hardest of lives. They were made out of sterner stuff than I. Where I was soft they were hard; where they were soft I was hard. They were much more passionate, more loving, more wise, and more humble than I.[10]
In this brief span of time I remember going to a basketball game, and while there, I looked at the people who surrounded me and judged them to be proud without evidence. I started walking more and more in the flesh as opposed to the Spirit.
I did not know my own heart. When a pastor spoke, "We have met the enemy and HE IS US!"[11] I searched my heart to see if this was true and came to the conclusion (through my own pride) that I was not the enemy. Yes it is true that Satan's kingdom is our real enemy. However, those who have received the new birth are a new creation; they at times may sabotage their spiritual success and in that sense they can be an enemy. But it is Satan who leads us into folly, temptation, and sin in order to lead us away from God. Satan is our true enemy. Satan's best weapon is lying to us. He wields power over us to the degree that we believe him. Anything done out of pride will bear bad fruit and that is what I did here. If we think we are invincible which is what I really believed (which is a

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[7] 1 Corinthians 8:1
[8] Philippians 4:8
[9] 1 Corinthians 10:12
[10] Cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-27
[11] Rick Joyner, There Were Two Trees In The Garden, MorningStar Publications (1986, 1990), p. 15

lie from the pit of Hell) then I am sabotaging God's will for my life, giving Satan a foothold in my life… and in that sense I am an enemy of self.
Adam the first man was created in the image of God and therefore good, but he fell into sin along with his wife Eve. Consequently, all of humanity has inherited these two attributes – the capacity to do good deeds, but attracted towards doing evil.
God warned me one day while I was sitting, semi-interested, in a math class at UBC. The Holy Spirit put a "foreign writing" into my mind. It was not like anything I'd ever experienced before and it said for me to feed God's sheep.
Much can be said about these words in relation to Saint Peter, but what did they mean to me at the time? I merely shrugged them off with a very complacent and insensitive attitude saying that I already did enough. At this point in my walk, if I chose to obey the command, in all likelihood I would not have had to go through the discipline of a Dark Night or Journey.
Jesus requests this from His sheep that think that their crosses are too small for them. That they have mastered the basics in Christian living, that they are too good for the world, and are bored with what they think God has asked them to do:

You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so that you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.[12]

I thought I was rich – and that I was knowledgeable, but my theologizing had become rigid and legalistic because I lacked the willingness to love. I majored on minor points, and minored on major issues. I was also jealous of my friend Fran because she was doing God's will by witnessing to others. I suspected unfairness from God on His part, but that was not the problem. I was simply lazy!
Looking back on the Overflowing Grace conference, I now realize that there was a lot of good in the seminars, but not completely.
The conference seemingly had all of the answers to my questions. I was very impressed with the speakers. So I bought the tapes recording the sermons given there. I started to listen to them over and over again, copying parts of them out on paper. I became obsessed with the material.
The fact that I thought I knew and understood it all after the conference. Combined with me buying into the ill-founded doctrine given at the conference that one couldn't lose one's salvation once one was saved. Made me dangerously lower my guard when it came to mortifying my own sins especially my pride. This became a volatile mix, and made me theologically unstable.
I even ventured to ask why I didn't have the main speaker at the conference as my pastor in Edmonton Alberta when I lived there. I was full of self-importance. What a mess!
I may have thought I had the answers to life's questions, but God would soon change the questions.

[12] Revelation 3:17-19, (emphasis mine)

Chapter 4

THE PROMISE

These developments progressively grew worse, but God is my Redeemer. During this time I was still going to a UCM Bible study, and this is where God decided to change the course of my life yet once again. One night in late March in 1992, Rod Young, a member of our group, had prophecies for everyone from God. For me the words were to be broken into Freedom. Rod asked me if he should pray for it. I winced at the idea of being broken – it strongly suggested pain! I didn't want the pain, but I consented because I wanted God's plan for my life. God was totally fair about it. God gave me a choice – either brokenness and then Freedom, or a gradual spiritual death because of pride. I had the choice, and so I decided to choose the more difficult road to life. A short time later events began to unfold.

Abraham the father of faith was also given a promise, and after he received it, he left what was familiar and went out not knowing where he was going.[13] In the same way, the inauguration of God's promise to me also brought disorientation, and the emergence of a sizeable bend in the road. I would go from being certain about my position in life to overwhelming insecurity and uncertainty. The natural light would fade fast only to leave me walking in darkness. I would also begin to experience growing pains.

Before I started my studies at UBC, I met another Christian on campus. She told me about an operation on her eyes that she had undergone to restore her vision. She said that after her surgery, she was forced to lie on her back in darkness because of bandages over her eyes. And that she had to do this for a year so that her eyes could heal. She also said that she had grown in her faith because of the experience. I didn't realize it then, but I later took this meeting with her to be a prophetic Godsend.

The first sign that there was something wrong occurred in the VST cafeteria while eating supper. I was alone, and Felix, a seminary student with the gift of prophecy, came up to me, and angrily announced to me that I could lose my salvation. I replied to the effect that my relationship with God was fine. Nevertheless his words went home to me like a bullet in the heart. I went to my room thinking that yes, something was wrong, and in my heart I knew it, even though there was as yet nothing wrong with my mental health.

A short time later I went with Felix, his fiancée, and a friend for a car ride. That night in the car my Journey into Darkness began – I was given an illness that would not be diagnosed for a long time to come. Later on I found out that this is common with people who get this kind of illness.

It was something that would push me into a crisis of faith. Something that would tear down my stubborn independence from God. Something that would make me into a perseverer. Something that would make me into a patient person. Something that would erode away my selfishness, and pride. Something that would grant me a more loving heart. Something that would act as an instrument in separating the light from the darkness inside of me. Something that would help make me into the person I always wanted to be

[13] Cf. Hebrews 11:8

inside.
It happened all at once; something went wrong with the way my mind functioned. The comfortable and secure environment in my mind where my consciousness is was disrupted. There was an actual physical sensation even though there are no pain sensors in the brain. Certain functions of the brain ceased and therefore my spirit - body connection was partially cut off. The brain functions would deteriorate over time. I was glad that God took that moment to plunge me into darkness – I was among friends.
Not long after this I remember being in my room at VST and deciding to listen to some music by Keith Green. Did I ever get a surprise – something applied almost finger like pressure to my throat. No other human was in the room with me. My first reaction after the initial attack was to think that somehow I was demonized. This was not a panic attack. The attack persisted, and I decided to scream. This only worsened it! I began to cry, and to feel sorry for myself. Whatever was attacking me was pleased with its business thus far, because now it stroked my chin and mouth too while all the time exerting pressure on my throat. I then decided to calm down, and when I did, the attack ceased. Thinking the worst, I promptly went and found Felix to have the supposed demons exorcised out of me.
I told Felix what I thought my problem was with tears. He took the Bible and was about to search it believing that it would provide the needed guidance, when he suddenly received a word of knowledge from God for me. It was, "God loves you". What I had experienced was a demonic attack, and I was not demonized. That was the first and last demonic attack that I would have in a while. Felix gave me the assignment of going through the Bible and looking up all the places where it said that God was faithful and loving.
After I became ill, my moods became erratic. They went up high when I remembered the goodness of God, and way down when I saw He wasn't doing anything to remedy my situation. I still remember going for a walk at one of the beaches near UBC in Vancouver, and while at the seashore I became so angry with God that I swore a bunch of profanities at Him. I felt really bad about doing this afterwards, but it was too late – I couldn't undo a single word. Would God forgive me? I thought that I had committed the unpardonable sin. Later I phoned my father, and he assured me that I hadn't committed that sin. I was very relieved.
On a Friday night about a month or so before my Journey into Darkness began, I remember going to a church service where one of the speakers was a missionary. The missionary told a story to make a point about where our relationships with God were at the time. The story goes like this:

In a chaotic part of the world where the right of rule often lies with those bearing arms, a church was holding a meeting when in walked a band of guerrillas. They promptly demanded all those who did not want to deny their faith to stand up and separate themselves from the others. After the guerrillas challenged the crowd with their weapons the congregation divided.
The leader of the guerrillas then lectured those who had not stood up for their supposed faith. He said that they were what was wrong with the country. The guerrillas then promptly shot those who had not stood up for their professed faith. Leaving those who had professed their faith standing. Apologizing for the interruption the guerrillas left.

Having gotten our attention with this story, the missionary then turned to us, and asked all who were willing to die for Jesus to stand up. I did along with others, just like Peter the apostle claimed before he denied Jesus three times. This confidence was now being tested in an unexpected way!

Many people would willingly die for their faith out of love for God. But how many of us would suffer for our faith? When prompted by Rod Young with God's promise to be broken into Freedom, I said a very reluctant "Yes" to being broken. Little did I know what I was embarking on.

I still remember being in my room at VST shortly after my Journey into Darkness began, with my friend Alex Pruss encouraging me onward with the promise of Heaven if I overcame my trials. I peered into my heart, felt the pain that was upon me and felt overwhelmed. I was willing, but my pain-racked flesh wasn't – I couldn't see a way through the pain, and so I cried out loudly, "I can't, I can't go on!" We are always far more capable of suffering than we think, as I was about to find out.

I was in a state of shock after I was given this illness.

Because this new cross was so heavy to begin with, I needed encouragement from many sources, one of which was from pastor David Chotka. David took me to the last chapter from the Gospel of Luke that in part describes Jesus' appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

The two disciples' conceptions of who Jesus was had been shattered because of His recent crucifixion. They felt the loss of Jesus, and so David said I should be able to relate to them well. To them, the world appeared to be upside down; it seemed that darkness had appeared to forever take away the light. One week Jesus seemed to be invincible, like with His triumphal entry into Jerusalem when the crowds praised and honored Him. Yet a short while later He was crucified. What had happened? Had they seen things the right way before? How had Jesus changed before their very eyes? What kind of a Messiah was He? Or, was He the Messiah? Was this a cruel joke? These are some of the same questions that I was faced with because of the beginning of my Dark Journey.

In short, the kind and tenderhearted Jesus I had known had been transformed right before my eyes. Was He still the same Jesus I had known? In some ways this was true, but not so in many other ways. My ideas of who He was would have to undergo much revision. What I found so hard to accept – the seemingly drastic discipline – I would later be thankful for, as it would teach me loyalty.

Another question that the two disciples also had was: "Why had Jesus been taken away from them?" I felt the same way in my plight. David tried to encourage me with the idea that Jesus was in the midst of the chaos with me. I couldn't physically see Him then, but looking back I know that He was.

I briefly tried to comfort myself with food, but when that didn't work I began to fast regularly. I began to worry over whether or not one could lose one's salvation. My reasoning was that if I could lose it then I most likely would because of the difficulty in this trial. I felt completely inadequate. At this time I painted the watercolor entitled "It Was Night I" below:

For a better view of this picture check out the Artwork section from this Website.

I told myself that my faith in the death of Jesus on the cross, which is what the picture portrayed, would get me through this trial.

As my illness progressed, things got more difficult. When I tried to think about moral issues or biblical truths and arguments, I could no longer "feel" the premises. There was no connection in the logic used from one point to the next. This was terrifying! Whenever I mentioned my symptoms to any Christians (I only trusted Christians at the time), they simply said, "We walk by faith not by sight!" This advice was practical, and I needed to do as they said, but it was frightening to me. Moreover, it did not solve my immediate concern – how am I to get better? If I had not spiritualized it so much, I may have found help sooner. No wonder so many people with mental illnesses commit suicide because they don't know where or how to get help!

When I first re-dedicated my life to Jesus, the Good News or Gospel was very sweet to my mouth. That changed early in my Journey through Darkness – the words from the Bible became bitter. The prophet Ezekiel and later on the apostle John reported eating scrolls given to them by God. They both found the scrolls sweet as honey in the eating, but of bitter after-taste.[14] When I first became ill and searched the Scriptures for comfort, Hebrews 10:38 stood out: "but my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back I will not be pleased with him." This did not comfort me. Instead it tasted bitter! Exercising faith while in the bend of the road or in the darkness is entirely different than when things are going well.

My intellect was no longer anchored in the comfort, ease, and in what I used to see as reality. Faith was required. This made me very defensive, and I started to repeat my arguments on dearly held beliefs over and over again in my head. Before long I began to find contradictions in my past thinking. I began to see how sloppy my theology was. Because of my illness, I was pushed into a crisis of faith. There are things that can be explained with reasonable premises, and then there is the realm of mystery. How could a finite mind comprehend it all? Where did faith and knowledge meet and depart? Questions, questions, and more questions washed over my mind. God was humbling me! One of the things I continued to do during this time was search for perspective over and over again to calm my mind and heart. I also knew many of the questions I asked myself were ill posed given the sort of premises I started with. That is, either no solution existed (because the question didn't make sense), or at least two contradictory conclusions existed (the result of having different interpretations of the same premises if the premises

[14] Cf. Ezekiel 3:3-14, and Revelation 10:8-10

are consistent, or having altogether contradictory premises). Even if the questions were well posed there was no guarantee that the conclusions were logically deducible from the premises by me.
Mysteries also pestered me – questions like, "How did God do this or that recorded event in the Bible?" or, "How does God know portions of the future?" gave me no rest! Did God play something like a chess game with the forces of darkness in order to bring this or that about? Could He also tell what we would do because of the inertia created by "our desires", "our wills", "our personalities", and the predictability of "our human nature"? Or, did He know everything just because He was God? This went on, and on...
Another way to describe what was happening to my mind is to compare it to the sand and waves on a beach. Thinking a thought was comparable to writing with my finger on the sand. No sooner was it thought in my mind or written in the sand when the doubt or waves washed over and obliterated it. I could no longer hold onto the premises in a meaningful way. I began to sweat profusely, lost more and more weight, went for longer and longer walks, and became more and more introverted. My focus turned inwards – could I solve my problems? My world was falling apart.
Because I was in shock very early on, God provided me with a faith builder on a Sunday when I went to a church called Church on the Way instead of University Chapel. I don't remember the sermon anymore, but I do remember that near the end of the service there was a time of sharing. It was then that one of the pastors, David Chotka, mentioned that his wife had received a word from the Lord that morning, but she was unable to be at church that day. The word was, "You are not one of those who fall back," an echo of Hebrews 10:39.
During this time a woman who was standing up at the front of the building asked for prayer. I rushed up and embraced her only to find out that my embrace gave her pain – she had cancer. After the prayer I went up to David in tears seeking reassurances about my predicament. He said that the words his wife had received that morning were for me – I was overjoyed!
Another sign that God gave me showing He still loved me, was the following vision given to my godmother Anita Patel and told in her own words:

I can remember... holding this blond two-year old on my lap and feeling his preciousness as only a mother feels for her own child, and it was you [René]. And when I came out of the vision so to speak I was crying for the loss of it – just like a flashback memory – only even more real and with greater psychological force. Like when you wake up from a dream and it is more real than your actual reality – terribly strong.

When I was told about this vision, it brought encouragement. It also was God's way of telling me that spiritually speaking I was still a two-year old babe. Another miracle occurred when my friends Alex Pruss, and Valerie Denka, together with me began a Bible study. It occurred just prior to one of our meetings while I was fighting and struggling inside to navigate through the darkness. Since Alex was late I went to check for him.
On my way outside I decided to stop the struggle. At that time Alex was standing before me, but more importantly God sent a bird to flutter about my head (so as to say, "Don't give up, René"). The bird meant that I ought to continue the struggle – this I did. Birds

normally keep their distance from humans. This bird actually flew back and forth in an arc about my head trying to get my attention. It was from God!
It was a new chapter in my life. Those that knew me at the time found out very soon that things had changed! I started reaching out for help to those closest to me. I even went to see a psychologist at UBC's Student Services on the advice of Kevin the leader of UCM. I could not slow down my thought process. My thoughts alarmed me too much – I did not like where they would go. It was like learning to swim all over again. The one moment I would be breathing air, and then the next moment I would be under water struggling desperately to get to the top. Then I would get water in my mouth and try to spit it out. Doubt from unanswered questions fueled my anxiety and my inability to stop thinking things through over and over again. When I first came to Vancouver in 1991, the Lord had given me the following verse:

In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength,[15]

The problem was that I was very ineffective in putting it into practice. If only I had read the verses that come after this one perhaps I would have applied myself better! The remaining verses are:

but you would have none of it.
You said 'No, we will flee on horses.'
Therefore you will flee
You said, 'we will ride on swift horses!'
Therefore your pursuers will be swift!
A thousand will flee at the threat of one;
At the threat of five you will all flee away,
till you are left like a flagstaff on a mountain top
like a banner on a hill.[16]

They describe what happened to me early on in my Journey through Darkness. The horses or my thoughts were indeed swift. The pursuers (doubts, questions, and alternative ideas) were swifter still. So I too could lament with the Psalmist:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept
  when we remembered Zion.
There on the poplar we hung our harps,
  for there our captors asked us for songs,
  our tormentors demanded songs of joy;
  they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
How can we sing the songs of the LORD
  while in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,

[15] Isaiah 30:15
[16] Isaiah 30:16-17

may my right hand forget [its skill].[17]

The possibility of never seeing the Promised Land again was very real to me. Would I give in to temptation and forsake my God, or would I suffer and be humbled by God and in time receive the promised Freedom? Seeking comfort I began to recite the Psalms. I also began to sing many spiritual songs in an attempt to recover my joy – it didn't work. Seeing the psychologist helped somewhat; he likened my thinking to the ringing of a bell. The bell was supposedly gigantic, and the best way to stop it from gonging was to let it ring out, not by pulling on the rope attached to the bell as I was apparently doing. The moral of the story is that as time went on things would work themselves out – the mind would quiet itself down as I got used to where I was.

Shortly after I got a copy of a work entitled The Dark Night by Saint John of the Cross[18] , I stopped seeing the psychologist. Saint John of the Cross lived from 1542 to 1591, when there weren't any psychologists. So I thought that if people could get through back then what I was experiencing now, why bother visiting a psychologist? This was a big mistake! I still was not diagnosed.

During this time I was still regularly attending University Chapel. Faced with the puzzle of my new circumstances, I began wondering how I'd earned this suffering. God was quick to answer me. At the tail end of a church service during a time of praying and sharing, a woman near the back of the building called out in a loud but trembling voice, "Everyone in this church is forgiven." I might have doubted her, but I could see it was something she was not in the habit of doing. This made me believe that she had spoken what God had revealed to her. From this I deduced that God was not punishing me to take revenge on me for my sins – He had forgiven me, and what I was undergoing was discipline.[19]

One Sunday, my friend Dan Huget came to visit me and we went to University Chapel together. God used the time there to remind me that He was still in me. Dan and I decided to sit on the right side of the building near the back. During the time when the community was praying and sharing, a man seated behind me began to speak out loudly, and what he had to say was directed to me. I don't remember much of what he said, but what I do remember him telling me is to look inside of myself. When I did this, the Holy Spirit made itself known to me via an "inner hug." It was very comforting!

Very early on into my illness, shortly before the end of UCM for that school year, UCM held a movie night. The movie shown that night was Chariots Of Fire. The spiritual food for the journey I took from this movie was from one of the runners named Eric Liddell. He compared the Christian walk to a race, and in order to win a prize in the race, one had to dig deep into the heart. One had to drive with effort towards the finish line despite the ache and fatigue of the body.

Because I became ill in March of 1992, and because the UCM Bible study finished, I promptly joined three others; one with Kevin, one with Felix, and one with David. I was frantic for help. So soon after my Journey through Darkness began, I thought that I

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[17] Psalm 137:1-5

[18] K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works Of St. John Of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), pp. 353-457

[19] Cf. Hebrews 12

already had gone through my share of brokenness. I initially put my hope in earnest prayer to God. I would pray with those whom I respected for God to grant me the promised Freedom. But nothing happened after a few months of pleading with God. God was not into instant gratification like I was. It would take a while for the initial shock to wear off. Later I would begin the process of accepting my lot.
I lost confidence in my own opinions and began to give more and more credence to what others said. God was humbling me! Saint John of the Cross said:

To reach a new and unknown land and journey along unknown roads, travelers cannot be guided by their knowledge and seek guidance from others. Obviously they cannot reach new territory or attain this added knowledge if they do not take these new and unknown roads and abandon those familiar ones. Similarly, people learning new details about their art or trade must work in darkness and not with what they already know. If they refuse to lay aside their former knowledge, they will never make any further progress. The soul, too, when it advances, walks in darkness and unknowing.[20]

Abandoning the well-trodden ruts of my diseased world-view or theology in which I had formerly taken pride, and trading it in for some mystery, humility, faith, hope, and love is what I was embarking on. Certainly guidance of some sort ought to be sought, preferably from the mature in Christ – those who have gone through similar trials.
Whenever we tackle something new, and there are some failures, or things get difficult, we generally begin to believe that we have made a mistake in pursuing that something new. Even God felt the same way when He grieved that He had made human beings as the book of Genesis records. And this is the way I felt early on in my Journey through Darkness. In my desperation I passionately told people that I didn't want to change, but instead I wanted things to be the way they had been. I said this for two reasons: (1) because I was afraid of the changes that the future might bring, and (2) because deep down inside I thought I was okay the way I was. I was hesitant to accept the truth that we humans are always changing for better or worse each step of the way.
Another event that took place early on while I was grappling and struggling to hold onto my faith was at one of the Bible studies that I attended. During the time of closing prayer in which we were seated in a circle, Tim Townshed, who sat beside me, prophesied – it was as though he went through a personality change. He became bold and powerful; he lurched forward and lovingly blurted out: "Hold onto My promise."
Tim knew very little about my situation, and certainly he knew nothing about my promise from God to be broken into Freedom. It was Jesus commanding me to hold onto the promise. With renewed effort I walked forth into desolation and pain.
I felt hollow like bamboo; or like a gutted fish. I felt like a faltering wick. Things grew darker as the storm continued to brew. My faith was erratic.

Part II

[20] K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works Of St. John Of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), p. 433, or N. 2. 16. 7.

TO BE BROKEN

Do not give the devil a foothold
(Cf. Ephesians 4:27)

In your struggle against sin,
you have not yet resisted to the point
of shedding your blood. (Hebrews 12:4)

A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.' (Luke13:6-9 NRSV)

Chapter 5

A DEVIL'S FOOTHOLD

Although initially God had kindly told me through Felix that I was not demonized; somehow afterwards I did become inhabited by a demon through not wearing the full armor of God.[21]
Because I saw myself as having so little faith, I wanted a certain spiritual gift from God that would help build me up in the faith. The only problem was that I had more faith in Satan giving me a counterfeit gift, than in God giving me a perfect gift. I didn't want a gift (or rather a curse) from the devil, but I did grant him a foothold in my life and he took it.[22]
Christians wear spiritual armor for a reason. Briefly believing that Satan had more power than God did in granting me a spiritual gift was the flaw or weakness in my spiritual armor. I did this while someone prayed with me. Because of what I said, the demons

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[21] Demonization of Christians is possible and a historic fact -- consider John and Paula Sandford who are modern day counselors/spiritual directors, and who have witnessed demonization of some Christians as they record in their book: John and Paula Sandford, Healing The Wounded Spirit, Victory House, Inc. (1985), p. 328. Or, for another different, yet honest and helpful look into this subject, see Chapter 11: The Danger Of Losing Control, by Neil T. Anderson, The Bondage Breaker, Harvest House Publishers (1990), pp.171-181.
[22] Cf. Ephesians 4:27

knew I was an easy target. I doubted the love and protection of God. I truly believed that somehow the devil could sneak into my life even though he wasn't wanted. I know that God didn't punish me by giving me a demon because of my lack of faith, but He couldn't do for me what I was supposed to do for myself. That is, to believe in His saving power. He did give me the grace to believe, but the decision was mine whether to act on it. When the demon entered my body I was conscious that a change had occurred but I was unaware of what.

I don't want to scare anyone away from asking God for the gifts of the Spirit. Seek for those good gifts from God, but don't give power to the demons that they wouldn't otherwise have. Wear the full armor of God.

Afterwards I became even more disoriented and confused – things happened so quickly. As the darkness increased so did the stress. I didn't know how to view things properly, and so at first I didn't recognize things for what they were. This included the way I viewed the symptoms of demonization that I experienced. Being used to the light, the darkness temporarily blinded me. I was walking along new paths, and so the maps (or world-view) I had depended on up until now gave very little direction here.

The first symptom I had that I later attributed to demonization was the following. I remember going to one of the beaches of English Bay in Vancouver, and while I was there my senses became flooded with a lust for every evil thing. It bathed or surrounded my consciousness, and was like a torrent, a dark river flowing through my body, a magnetic force. It was imposed upon my senses; it did not come from my spirit, soul, or body. It was foreign. This was not the only symptom but it is the first.

About that time I began to have a real fear of hell because of the first symptom of "imposed lust." It was like a tug-a-war, like sitting on a fence – on one side was a sea of lust, and on the other despair and the fear of hell. The problem was that I could not remain seated or balanced on the fence for long because both forces were at work trying to overwhelm me. It took a real effort to fight off both of these states for any length of time, but gradually through the grace of God I persevered to the point where this diminished to zero.

It was around June of 1992 when my mom and dad came to visit me in Vancouver in response to their son's darkened phone calls and letters. When they saw that the situation was not favorable they decided to take me home with them to Devon, Alberta. I was grateful.

When we got to Devon, they immediately made me useful by letting me do chores. This was helpful in creating a diversion in my mind so I could rest from my theological messes for brief periods. One moment I would have a solution to a problem, and the next moment I would be in despair because there was some flaw in my solution or I just didn't have the courage and faith to believe the solution. When my thoughts became too oppressive my Mom told me to praise Jesus. Surprisingly it worked; praising God drove away the need to solve mysteries.

A symptom of me being demonized were the attacks I experienced around my throat, although I had them before and after while not demonized. The only difference was that now I felt the demon reach up and out of my chest for my throat. I tried to fight this off with the Name of Jesus, but every time I did this, a power struggle would start. The attacks were repeated regularly in this way while I was demonized.

As I adjusted to my situation, nearly two months passed and it was decided that I should

go back to Vancouver to continue in the doctorate program. I had not applied early enough for re-admission to the VST residence on campus, so there was no place for me to stay. However, Dad knew some people in BC who might be able to help and phoned them. Thankfully they knew Hugh and Mildred Dempster who lived close to UBC, and who were willing to take me in.

It was about this time that I lost partial control over my facial muscles. They simply just tightened up and felt hard and unresponsive – it was also a symptom of demonization. The following is a prayer I wrote to God during this time:

Chase me as You did when I was young
Come quickly, really quick please,
see I am waiting for you,
keeping myself clean as a virgin
as best as I can
O be Thou my Light
Be Thou my wind
Be Thou my foundation
O Father, grant me Your shelter, Your rest
I long for you day and night
Nothing else satisfies me like you do
O Father come, come quickly
Grant me oil for my lamp...

The first line laments the fact that God pursued me early on, but now He was hiding Himself from me. The middle lines show my poverty without God. The last line shows my dependence on God to nourish my commitment to Him and my faith in Him.

The only highlight at school was that I managed to pass two of my comprehensive exams. Shortly before Christmas I had a vision. One morning I woke up and sat up in my bed. I proceeded to look towards the door on my left, and in walked a large lion that climbed up onto my bed and came right up to me, face to face. I looked at it and reached my hand out to touch its forehead with the tip of my finger. After I withdrew my finger the lion vanished.

The meaning of this vision became apparent to me later on that day. It happened like this: I simply asked myself the question, "How do I know that God is good?" I had always believed that He was good, but the question had not entered my mind in this way before, so direct, so pressing, and so urgent. It filled me with dread. I had believed God was good most of my life, but now I wanted absolute proof to cure my fears in this trial.

I wanted to know why I believed that God is absolutely good. How do you prove God is good? It takes faith to know anything. Courage to believe in harsh circumstances proves elusive to the proud, and that's the rub! The lion was symbolic of Satan, and the question that had popped into my mind was his. Through my pain, suffering, and disappointment, one of Satan's minions would be there to remind me of this question hoping to convince me of his master's lies.

The next sign of demonization occurred while I was painting Blessed Are Those Who Wait On The Lord:

For a better view of this picture check out the Artwork section from this Website.

As the painting of the picture drew to completion, the picture began to glow brilliantly, as if it were powered by a gigantic flashlight, and not because of my skill as a painter. This could have puffed up my pride, but I rejected it as a hallucination from the demonic. How it happened to me I did not ponder, I had enough questions. What did stand out to me were the words by J.R.R. Tolkien:

All that is gold does not glitter
Not all those who wander are lost
The old that is strong does not wither
Deep roots are not reached by the frost.[23]

Small words are the strongest, and these words gave me both strength and hope. I viewed myself as a pilgrim wandering in the wilderness but not lost to God's sight. What I wanted were roots that reach down deeply into God, and which are always growing.
Another strange experience occurred to me in the Dempsters' back yard. As I walked up the path towards the house, my mind was preoccupied with finding out what was wrong with me. All of a sudden, my mouth opened and out came this dramatic and impressive roar of anger. It was so unexpected, because I was not angry at the time. It was not the suppressed anger of my childhood finally being released. It was the manifestation of the demon still hiding within me because of my own ignorance.
The next manifestation of demonization was the loss of feeling in my chest. However, if I tried to massage the chest or somehow tighten my muscles by breathing in, there was a constricting sensation about the nerves in the center of the chest.
As Christmas approached, the question: "How do I know that God is good?" began to grow in power. There were times that it bothered me intensely and other times it seemed to be inconsequential. My world-view was in crisis; my innermost being was on the verge of being torn down. A new person was to emerge with a new world-view founded on a surer foundation, although I could not see this at the time.

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[23] J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord Of The Rings, Part I; Fellowship Of The Ring, Ballantine Publishers (1991), p. 231

For my birthday I received a card from my mother. On the outside of the card was a needlepoint picture of a man jumping in the air for joy. In the background was the sun rising above the horizon. On the inside of the card were the words, "My saving power will rise on you like the sun."[24] This gave me hope, and later proved to be prophetic!
That December I flew to Alberta to be with my family. While there, I felt the hostility of the demon in me towards Mom and Dad. The demon also began to oppress my spirit or consciousness by inflicting pain on it. The demon forced or pushed my consciousness or spirit down my head towards my throat. But each time it did this, it promptly gave up, and my spirit returned to where my brain was located. I don't know for absolute certainty, but perhaps the demon wanted to take over the rest of my body to do some serious harm to those I loved. I believe that God prevented this from happening.
Thankfully God knew I was demonized, and led Mom to perform an exorcism on me. She used the book called "The Bondage Breaker" as a guide through the exorcism. It has a lot of helpful truth on the subject. It is helpful to those who are confused about reality, and are struggling to fight off lies from the devil about God's goodness. When one is grounded in the truth of God's goodness the journey becomes more bearable and God is able to guide one better through the darkness. The book was helpful to me and gave me hope and direction. No book is perfect… each book from a solid Christian perspective can offer some solutions or keys to the puzzles and riddles found in our minds and hearts. Another book on the subject is one called "Unbound" by Neal Lozano.
It took some practice, but Mom did get the demon to respond. She bound the demon through the power of Jesus and commanded it to reveal its name to me. It communicated its name through a "foreign writing" in the mind. The name was long and I don't remember it. My mother then proceeded to cast the demon out of me. Something definitely left me – what a relief. Thanks to God! However, this did not take away my still undiagnosed illness.
After the exorcism, I too cried aloud like Gandalf does in The Lord Of The Rings to the demon that was challenging:

'You cannot pass' ... 'I am a servant of the Secret Fire, wielder of the flame of Anor. You cannot pass. The dark fire will not avail you, flame of Udûn. Go back to the shadow! You cannot pass.'[25]

Like Gandalf's, my victory was short lived. The demon left all right, but came back to attack me through my illness. It dragged me into an intense power struggle deep within the dark abyss of my mind. Now that the demon had left the temple of my body, I had a more accurate view of the disconnection between my spirit and body. I began to have symptoms normally attributable to a known illness, which I unfortunately still did not know anything about. The interactions I had with the demonic in my mind were part of the illness.
I lacked the ability to describe the symptoms, because they were in the head where no one could see or experience them as I did. Therefore, I was gripped with plenty of fear.

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[24] Malachi 4:2
[25] J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord Of The Rings, Part I; Fellowship Of The Ring, Ballantine Publishers (1991), p. 429

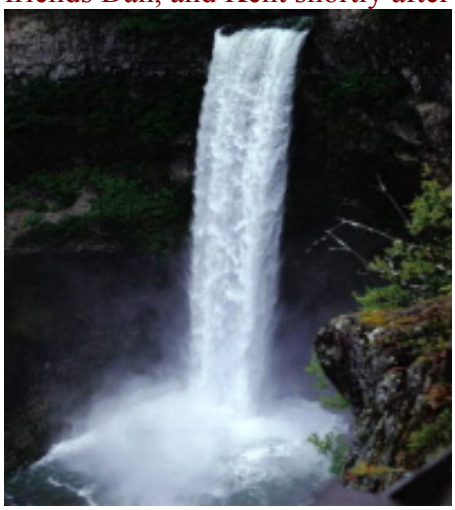
The environment in which my consciousness was submerged in my brain was harsh, and therefore hostile to faith in a loving God. Paradoxically, that's where faith and love can blossom the most – they have to or else they die. My intellect was still dislodged from the affections of my heart, but on a stronger leash of faith. The attacks around the throat ceased until August of 1993 when they began to reoccur.

The following Sunday, I went with Mom and Dad to their church called Saint Maria Goretti. I don't remember the sermon given, but I do remember going up for communion, swallowing the flesh and blood of Christ, walking towards the back, and suddenly seeing darkness all about me with light shining into it. I believe that I was looking into the spiritual realm, and that the light was coming from God. As Scripture says: "God is light and in Him there is no darkness," and further, "the Blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light."[26] It was a glorious light, whiter than any snow or bleached linen, although I could not see the source. This radiant beauty, this brightness, and this magnificent splendor captured my heart. It was like nothing I'd ever seen before up until this moment!

Then I saw a yellowish lightning-shaped light reach towards me from the source, and it extended all the way to my head and into my mind. It made my thought process go backwards and forwards and it felt like God was playing with my mind. Then the yellowish light disappeared.

The white radiance that was still shining in front of me diminished and then flared up briefly. My brain began to work completely, but as quickly as it began to function to full capacity it too began to diminish. I was left struggling in the darkness of my immediate circumstances with an illness that I didn't know the name to.

The closest likeness to this Heavenly light in the created universe that I've come across thus far was when I visited certain waterfalls. One example of the glory seen was the "Brandywine" falls just outside Vancouver, BC, when I visited it while I was with my friends Dan, and Kent shortly after the above incident took place. Below is a photo:



For a better view of the Photo check out the Photo section from this Website.

The waterfall was really spectacular, so rich in soft white mist. It reflected, or captured a small portion of the gloriously infinite light of the one true God – our Father, our Brother, and our Sanctifier. I can wholeheartedly relate to what the Psalmist said to God below,

[26] 1 John 1:5, and 1 Timothy 6:15-16

because of my experience above:

Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls;
all your waves and breakers have swept over me.[27]

Chapter 6

FURTHER HUMBLING EXPERIENCES

From January of 1993 to July of the same year was the next period of being humbled. After the brief mountain top experience, I was in the valley again. I returned to Vancouver to renew my studies at UBC. I did not know what was wrong with me, that I had a treatable illness through medications. This meant suffering in unknowing and darkness until I knew what was wrong with me. I did not know what to do about my illness, yet it felt extremely urgent to me to do something about it. So I got onto my knees in my room, and prayed to God that He would restore the joy of His salvation in my heart.

Later on I found out from Mom that she had a dream of me that very evening. In the dream she saw me pray my prayer to God on my knees. She also saw Mary the mother of Jesus there, and was told by her that I first had to go through whatever was in store for me before God would restore me. God had heard my prayer!

Because I was in such a mess, my godmother Anita suggested that I go and see someone professionally such as either a psychologist, or a psychiatrist. Since I had a bias against the latter, I chose Alex Angioli, a doctoral candidate in psychology at the time, as well as a committed Christian. Although we would make mistakes together, he would help guide me both practically and theologically.

Here's an example of how God began to purify my faith with the help of Alex a few weeks into counseling.

I was going for plenty of walks while struggling to find a foothold in my heart and mind as the waters of testing flowed over my foundations. It wasn't long before I became troubled by the idea of there being a dark force, all powerful like God, but not God, that was out to get me. It felt very real, but it wasn't overwhelming. So I told Alex about it at one of our meetings. Guided by the Holy Spirit he pinpointed where it was coming from. It came from guilt I had stored up when I was a teenager still living with my parents. During that time I always felt like there was something I hadn't done or wasn't doing in order to please my Dad. The moment this was brought to light something lifted off my head physically. Instantly, both the Phantom and the fear it induced disappeared. Because of this I was left struggling without the guilt. It took some getting used to – in some dark way up until this point I had been dependent on this guilt to motivate me to do good. I was appeasing the darkness instead of loving out of thankfulness. I was not motivated by Love, as much as I thought I was.

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[27] Psalm 42:7

Strangely enough, I felt weaker after this cleansing took place. This was because most of the muscles of love in my heart either had not been used or had been poorly used before. They were very tiny and weak, and I needed to exercise them in order to go on in my walk with Jesus.

While the above experiences made me feel like I was making some progress. I still did not feel too comfortable with God because of my dark and painful circumstances. My faith was still like that of an infant. I felt tempted to distrust God because of certain Bible passages that were difficult to interpret. I really did not know God like I thought I did. Should I continue to accept the good things in life as God's gifts, and accept the pain He had given me as discipline for my own good? Or, should I disown God and believe instead that I didn't deserve my suffering? After all God may be good, but would He continue to be good to me? Or, should I believe that my circumstances would never get any better? Just what could I expect from God? Could He be trusted? Which path should I take? I was at the crossroads in my life.

My spiritual nightmare also grew because I really didn't understand the relationships and differences between the ideas of "faith", "knowledge", "certainty", "absolute truth", and "reasonable doubt" that well.

I needed to work through all of these issues in order to find my footing again. On both practical and philosophical levels, these questions would need some major eye opening on my part.

All these questions made me feel what Saint Paul spoke about in his letter to the Corinthian Church:

Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.[28]

Because of my doubts, I started to think if God is "absolutely good" then it would take infinite knowledge to prove it, something we don't possess. I would later see this differently. Faith and knowledge can be tricky things to measure. Thinking that we know certain people because of the way we've perceived them to behave towards others and us after so many years can be dangerous. The same is true in our relationship with God. Could I see the goodness of God as revealed to me in (1) the way He created the world, (2) the way He created me, (3) our relationship together, (4) what was written in the Scriptures (especially the Gospel narratives), (5) the Church, and (6) the teachings of a divided Christianity? Even if there is "absolute proof" of God's goodness, it is human to doubt. In the past I had naively claimed to know God absolutely; yet here I was discovering my doubt in the goodness of God!

Faith bridges our hearts and minds, (which are capable of receiving knowledge and forgetting it) to God and His goodness. We usually say we have knowledge of something if we are certain we can see it, or infer it. We usually say we have faith in something if we are certain about it but don't see it. What one person says he knows, another might say it is only faith. When one person says he has knowledge it may only be faith or even wishful thinking. What once was faith in something might become knowledge. Also, what once was knowledge might become faith, and this is the way it was for me. What I

[28] 2 Corinthians 1:9

once rigidly held as truth I discarded to embrace the realm of faith and mystery. The wisdom that pain taught me, I now held to be true whether I considered it to be knowledge or faith.

My Dark Night began to feel like a road with many bends in it. Each bend, or circumstance brought into question the goodness of God. Some of the biggest bends to start with were: "Is God just and loving to all?" "In particular, will God be good to me?" and "Is God going to heal me?"

Even more bends in the road would be revealed later. When the road straightened out for a bit, and I saw a bit more light, I felt more confident in the goodness of God. The light beckoned me to depend on God in faith, and the darkness exercised that faith. The bends in the road and the darkness I felt caused suffering that was unimaginable before my Dark Journey began.

As mentioned above, this whole process of suffering and unknowing made me feel the sentence of death. It was painful, and frightening, for as Scripture states:

unless a wheat grain falls into the earth,
it remains only a single grain,
but if it dies
it yields a rich harvest.[29]

This became the pathway to humility for me, a dreadfully narrow way, requiring courage and the desire to love. As a prayer in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi said, "it is in dying that we are born to eternal life." After my recommitment to God in 1989, I knew there was a lot more to love than at first glance, but I gradually lost sight of this before the promise came.

God is love, and that means mystery is involved. No matter how far one goes along the path of love here on earth there are always detours leading to sin, and always more to learn. I'm not just talking about grasping it intellectually, but living it out in one's heart, one's community, and the world.

No one can define love. Their definitions will always fall short, and the moment we think we can we've limited our ability to love. The Love Chapter, First Corinthians 13, is not a full definition of love, but a guide! The problem is that love requires pure motives. When we hear the words, "love is kind" we often think that if we have been kind then we have loved. We can be kind yet still lack love. So much of what we call love is only lukewarm human sentiment.

Look at all the broken relationships that there are in the world. Lovers are scarce in this world. Most humans pretend that they are lovers. Sure, people romanticize about loving others, but rarely do they follow through. We inevitably count what's in it for us, and once things get difficult we generally abandon commitments. Very few people want to be servants. Most people think of themselves as good because they compare themselves with their neighbors. We aim low, so our practice is in the gutter. We have too many people believing in themselves, and not in a power greater than themselves.

Doubt can be good. In Christian circles it is frowned upon most of the time. In my life and during this trial it has had both destructive and constructive consequences.

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[29] John 12:24, Jerusalem Bible

Obviously, if I doubt God I am usually led into sin, but doubt has life giving qualities as well. It is good for instance, when I'm on the wrong path, and thoroughly convinced I'm not in error, when an overlooked detail might spur on doubts that change my course of action.

Therefore doubt and faith were my constant companions. Courage is what I chiefly needed. A shallow heart, one that is ignorant about the deeper workings and practice of love has a difficult time mustering courage. Cowardice is the chief attribute (next to pride) of those who doubt the goodness of God! Faith in God is the path to Love. Cowards abandon roads that will cost them something from themselves. Cowards fight the wrong battles. They might do dangerous things, but are weak at love. Loving others is dangerous to our own interests, because it always costs something from us.

I remember talking to my friend Alex Pruss over the phone in early January, in 1993, and openly telling him about my doubts. It was then that Alex got cut off the phone line, and instead I got connected to a little girl or boy who said repeatedly in a strong sweet voice, "I love you." To me this was a miracle – God was telling me that He loved me!

The human heart is passionately distrustful. The truly proud embrace the autonomy of calling the shots, and the power of accusing God with guilt, whereas the humble wear confusion, doubt, darkness, and insecurity as crowns of thorns. It's important to realize if I had been demanding these signs from God as proof of His love, I would have been coldly distancing myself from God making myself His judge. God can't save those who refuse to come into His presence believing that He is good and rewards of those who seek Him. My instinct for self-preservation worked over time – a God-given instinct. I felt tempted to save myself even if it meant disowning God. However, Jesus said, "Anyone who tries to save his life will lose it, but anyone who loses his life for my sake will gain it."[30] The giving away of self is necessary for love to manifest, but it also requires faith in God's goodness, because all love at its foundation is cooperating with God. Demanding that I be favorably preserved is ugly because it is evil and violates God's law of love as well as His sovereignty. Humbly petitioning God for life on the other hand is acceptable to Him.

Before my Journey through Darkness, I had read very few books on spiritual matters, but my ugly spiritual pride had grown anyway. By the time my Dark Journey was near completion, I had read many more books. Instead of being proud because I thought I understood them, my opinions on them would vary.

For Christmas, Mom and Dad had given me three books that I had asked for. They were Inside Out by Dr. Larry Crabb, and two by Philip Yancey: Where is God When it Hurts?, and Disappointment with God.[31] Dr. Crabb's book talked about sin in the heart, our self-protective agendas, and the ugliness and presumption of a demanding spirit. Initially it showed me some of my hidden sinfulness. Later on God would use it to bring healing and hope to my situation. The two books by Philip Yancey, reinforced part of what I already knew – I did not want hardship, pain, and disappointment to drive me away from God as others had let it.

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[30] Matthew 16:25

[31] Larry Crabb, Inside Out, Navpress (1988), Philip Yancey, Where Is God When It Hurts?, Zondervan Publications (1977); and Philip Yancey, Disappointment With God, Zondervan Publications (1991)

At about this time, before the first anniversary of my illness, I had to make some heavy decisions about my future. In particular, I was tempted deep within to quit everything I was doing, retreat, and wait for my salvation – the promised Freedom. I talked to my friend Dan Huget about this possible future path. He recommended that it would be unwise for me to do so. I took his advice thankfully. Today, although I benefited very little materially from this decision, at least I benefited in character by not becoming a quitter. God often forges new character in us when we decide not to give up in hardship. The fight of faith was difficult. The illness drained immense amounts of energy out of me, besides slowly eating away at the fabric of my life. As time passed, I got weary. I got so tired, that I began to long for rest and peace. To seek rest at this time would mean spiritual suicide, I had to fight for my faith. I began to long for the good old days again. God doesn't lead us backward, only forward! The future looked dark and tasted bitter; I could not move backward in time. Somehow because of God's love I had enough grace to persevere through each long and exhausting day.
I still remember being at a session of counseling with Alex Angioli, and telling him that I did not know where I was going. I was desperate, because my future seemed so uncertain to me. I was also struggling to know why I believed God was good. There was a fight going on inside of my heart – I was learning to search more passionately for Truth.
Just as the beloved in the Song of Songs had to get up from her bed in search of her lover, I too had to seek after the one my heart was infatuated with:

All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him. I will get up now and go about the city, through its streets and squares; I will search for the one my heart loves. So I looked for him but did not find him [yet].[32]

Later on I still remember giving up on the hopeless struggle to know with "absolute" certainty that God is completely good. Instead I decided to trust in Him, and in His Goodness. I turned from this hopeless search to trying to find out what was wrong with me instead. What else could I have done? I was encouraged to seek after the Freedom promised me by God, and that meant in part fixing whatever was wrong with me – that which caused me so much pain, suffering, and unknowing in my soul. After all, Jesus did say for us to:

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.[33]

After I told Alex Angioli my worry that I did not know where I was going, he told me not to put so much pressure on myself. Then God gave Alex a word of knowledge for me right there as we sat on the couch in his living room. It was, "I am digging tunnels of love in your heart". That caught my attention. It was also on my heart to ask God what was wrong with me, but I did not have the presence of mind to ask Him.
Shortly after my Journey through Darkness began, I was asked by my friend Peter Dove

[32] Song of Songs 3:1-2
[33] Luke 11:9-10

if I could help him for a couple of days in his irrigation business. The work was really tough – with a spade I had to dig trenches into the dry stone hard ground. Most of the soil was so compact, and there were also so many tough tree roots to cut through, that I made progress at a snail's pace. Later, tunnels or pipes would be installed that would bring the much needed water to the parched soil, grass, plants, and trees. This exercise later became an example of what God was doing to me during my trial – digging tunnels of love in my heart.

For a time the demons bothered me considerably. As time wore on this ceased, and I attributed this to the counseling that I received from Alex Angioli. The more I ignored the demons the less they interfered with my life. However, during this time I did not know how to describe what was going on in my mind, and so I made no progress towards a diagnosis. I thought this meant suffering in unknowing and darkness until I knew what was wrong with me. Later on I would find out that the road to recovery would involve more suffering.

The following are sayings from Saint John of the Cross:

To come to enjoy what you have not
you must go by a way in which you enjoy not.
To come to the knowledge you have not
you must go by a way in which you know not.
To come to the possession you have not
you must go by a way in which you possess not.
To come to what you are not
you must go by a way in which you are not.[34]

I was definitely going by a way in which I "enjoyed not," "knew not," "possessed not," and "was not." It was a very humbling predicament. The path was uncomfortably narrow, and my swelled pride in pseudo-knowledge and faulty intelligence had to shrink. I say pseudo because in the past I had mixed up the ideas of belief and knowledge. Doubt and unknowing caused me to give up my old diseased world-view because there were so many superficial beliefs in it that were useless in this wilderness.

Through the adversity I began to purchase with my faith the desperately needed ability and willingness to love God, others, and myself, which was something that I lacked in the past. That doesn't mean that I saw this reality in my life immediately as time went by, as if for every pound of suffering I went through, God granted me a pound of character instantaneously. Instead, God wanted me to get intimately acquainted with the wickedness in my own heart, and at this point in time I only had vague beliefs about its corruption. Before God could grant me a new heart, He had to show me what was wrong with the old one, and this would come later.

Part of my early strategy to get healthy worked like this. Since I believed that my attitudes towards sin were responsible for all the pain I was going through. I tried to uncover all of my hidden sins, repent (change my mind about my position on them) and therefore act differently, and so somehow miraculously put an end to my mental

[34] K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works Of St. John Of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), p. 111, or from Sketch of Mount Carmel

suffering. I also thought it was possible that I was sexually abused as a child by someone, and that I needed to uncover the circumstances surrounding it for me to be restored to health again. These sorts of strategies can work with fixing a broken heart, but won't be of any use in fixing a mental illness. One requires different tools for such a job, and this I would find out later.

Because of the difficulty involved with my illness, I decided to turn my will over to God for Him to control. Since the situation grew worse in doing this (because I began to feel weaker), I became angry with God. I told Alex Angioli about this, and he said that there was a big difference between turning over one's will and submitting one's will to God. The former is what cult members do with their leaders, whereas the latter is Freeing. God has given us limited sovereignty because we are made in His image. And that means that He has made us to be dependent on Him for many things, but not everything – a train can only be useful so long as it remains on its tracks. It is Free to go to many places so long as it submits to the tracks. God does not want to control our every decision. However, He does demand obedience to the law of Christ – that is, to humbly love others from the heart. His call to us is to be found in Christ, because Freedom is found in Him alone! Immediately after I took my will back I found the strength that was siphoned off return to me, and consequently I felt a bit stronger.

My friend Alex Pruss had taken it upon himself to love/advise/and encourage me early on in my Journey through Darkness. One of the things he would get me to do was to go swimming with him at the UBC pool. On one of these occasions I was struggling much more than usual to survive the intense darkness within my soul. It was as though God, His goodness, and His grace were totally absent from me. It seemed as though life were ebbing away in a final darkness. It was so bad that I told Alex about it.

Alex took immediate action – he suggested that we change from our swimming trunks into our clothing and make our way to the noon Mass on campus. With great effort we made it in time for communion, during which I took a piece of Christ's flesh dipped it in His blood and swallowed it. While it was still in my throat it was changed into power that I felt surge up into my brain. This "power" can rightly be described as God's "grace." It gave me life! I felt strength in my spirit and the parts of my brain that weren't functioning began to work but only briefly. It moved me out of this oppressive state, and into a more bearable darkness. As Jesus said, "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."[35] I felt encouraged.

The wine and the bread of the Lord's Supper are a means of life giving grace to the believer. It is not simply a ritual of obedience. Much can be said about proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes again every time we partake of this supper. But more can be said about this living sacrifice – it proclaims the resurrection from the dead as well, because Christ is alive and still multiplying and giving His body today!

Life became more manageable for a short while, and so the faith that was granted to me during my suffering began to show itself in confidence in God's goodness during this brief period. I began to realize that although I believed in the goodness of God, I still wasn't too sure He would heal me. After all, it was close to the first anniversary of God giving me the promise to be broken into Freedom.

I thought that living life with all the adversity I was experiencing up until now in the

[35] John 6:33

story was too difficult a burden to carry for the rest of my life. Besides there was a Freedom component to the promise that I still did not understand in all its ramifications. So I spoke to my friend Alex Pruss about it in one of our many phone conversations. He did not give me a theological treatise on faith and prayer, but rather he identified himself with me by saying, "I know where you are – I've been there." That quieted my worry over the matter – I was in God's hands.

Shortly before Easter, I knew that one of the readings in the liturgy would contain the following:

Jesus said to her, I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?[36]

Yes, I did believe this, and so I went to church that Sunday half expecting a miracle. I met my friend Alex Pruss outside the church building that morning for he had gone to the earlier Mass. He half-jokingly said for me to go and have my mini resurrection during Mass.

That did it! Perhaps Alex was speaking prophetically – I became convinced that he was, and that God would literally resurrect me out of my Dark Journey. I was very disappointed because nothing happened. After Mass ended, I had to fight off my disappointment so that it would not turn to bitterness.

After Easter in 1993, I returned to Devon, Alberta to be with my parents and to have a time of rest from school. During that time my godmother Anita visited Mom and me, and she told us a story about her brother in England who is a musician. He became so blind he could not see his music because of black floaters in his eyes caused by stress.

So in his intense emotional darkness he obtained recordings of the London shows so that when he got called in for a deputizing job he could handle the show without having to read the music. He also lost part of his hearing. He was put on medication. This cleared up his eyesight and part of his hearing in ten months time. The moral of this story was clear, I needed to be diagnosed and put on medication, but could I follow through?

Once in Vancouver, I made a trip to Student Health Services at UBC Hospital, because the illness was so pressing. The psychiatrist there gave me a sample of antidepressants after I told him that I was going to see a psychiatrist by the name of Dr. McKinstry in the near future. My belief was that I had a chemical imbalance of some sort.

My meeting with Dr. McKinstry had mixed results. After I told him a fair bit of my story, he told me that there were no such things as demons. I had to disagree.

He said that the Church was wrong in destroying culture through its evangelism. This was something I needed to hear.

He told me that I ought to pursue a relationship with a woman. He said that if I ever came back to him, he would put me on tranquilizers because I was not depressed. This attempt at getting diagnosed turned out to be a failure.

Finally, he said that there is always fear in the heart of every person. He believed every person also carries with them a burden that can best be described as guilt. He did not know about the ability of God's perfect love to cast out all fear. And he had closed his

[36] John 11:25-26, NRSV

mind to the forgiveness of his sins by Jesus as far as I knew.
I left his office determined in my faith, but also at a loss – what was wrong with me? I did not know! What I believed about needing medication was sharply attacked by Dr. McKinstry. I didn't need tranquilizers in the normal sense of the word. Little did I know that the word "tranquilizer" was a name given to the types of medications used to treat the kind of illness I had. If I had known this I would have taken up Dr. McKinstry on his offer to put me on tranquilizers. Blessed are the knowledgeable.
I talked to Mom and Dad about what had happen and they advised me to stay on the anti-depressants, and to go and see another psychiatrist. This time I saw Dr. Pullmer at UBC. He did not attack me. Instead, he said two important things; first, I was not suffering from depression, but something else, and second, there was a discrepancy in the first two psychiatrists' diagnoses. He concluded that I needed to be diagnosed correctly. This was excellent advice, but did I take it?
Sadly no! I did not like the fact that Dr. Pullmer had a grin on his face for a moment when I told him my story. I confused Dr. Pullmer's sense of humor with what I wrongly perceived to be his shallowness. Based chiefly on this I decided to see him no longer. I would pursue a purely psychological/spiritual treatment for my illness as I was doing with Alex Angioli. I really showed poor judgment here. I was confused as to what I thought a psychiatrist could do for me: Was he going to heal my spirit or my brain? The brain, yes, but not necessarily the spirit, and this I would find out later.
During late May I made the following entry in my journal:

I had a dream that I believe is from You [my God]. It was of me, in my coldness, darkness, and aloneness surrounded within a tent, conscious or semiconscious, aware of a protector outside the tent experiencing the same dampness – shivering cold – dark in the night. Thank you Lord Jesus!

The coldness, darkness, and aloneness spoke of my hardship and circumstances. The tent spoke about my dependence on God for everything, for I was becoming like Abraham the father of faith who also lived in tents. I did not want to establish my independence from God and build a city or an evil storehouse to mock God. My protector was Jesus, and He felt my hardship.
Let me explain this figure of speech. Establishing one's independence from God has to do with devising twisted, dark, manipulative, and depraved schemes in order to get what one desires. All fallen people have storehouses in their hearts that contain evil commitments, desires, or goals that have to do with not wanting to sacrifice themselves for the cause of Love.
Only those who consciously depend on God with faith can love supernaturally. Everyone can love naturally without being in a relationship with God. Supernatural love completes the natural loves and extends them to where they ought to be.
It takes faith in God to pass through trials, temptations, darkness, or bends ahead in the road with dignity, truth, justice, and love. Those without some faith or confidence will break easily, or get corrupted, or commit suicide if the trials they face are too strenuous.

Chapter 7

THE LION

A certain darkness covers the face of the earth because of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden ever so long ago. This isn't a darkness caused by a lack of sunlight, but rather it is a spiritual darkness of lies, murder, and robbery.

Believe it or not, Satan and his servants are still at work deceiving those with unguarded hearts. Having super-human intelligence and having studied humans both on the inside and outside for literally thousands of years, they prey on those not grounded in truth and love.

The wicked wizard Saruman in The Lord Of The Rings personifies Satan and his emissaries. Here is a taste of Saruman's speech:

Suddenly... [a] voice spoke, low and melodious, its very sound an enchantment. Those who listened unwarily to that voice could seldom report the words they heard; and if they did, they wondered, for little power remained in them. Mostly they remembered only that it was a delight to hear the voice speaking, all that it said seemed wise and reasonable, and desire awoke in them by swift agreement to seem wise themselves. When others spoke they seemed harsh and uncouth by contrast; and if they gainsaid the voice, anger was kindled in the hearts of those under the spell. For some the spell lasted only while the voice spoke to them, and when it spoke to another they smiled, as men do through a juggler's trick while others gape at it. For many the sound of the voice alone was enough to hold them enthralled; but for those whom it conquered the spell endured when they were far away, and ever they heard that soft voice whispering and urging them. But none were unmoved; none rejected its pleas and its commands without an effort of mind and will, so long as its master had control over it.[37]

And so the vision of the lion in my room at the Dempsters' home came to fulfillment again in what would be one of many encounters. Let me set the stage.

With my mind and future still in darkness because of my circumstances I slowly made my way to being in union with God through faith, hope, and love. One step along this path meant examining how logic, intelligence, and understanding fit into my emerging world-view.

I had to ask myself if I trusted logic, intelligence, and understanding the way God had given them to me. The lion was only too eager to help. He simply attacked my faith in, and dependence on these tools by saying I could not depend on "logic" to come to the Truth.

The lion knew, as did I, that if he said anything more than this by way of argument he would defeat the idea that logic doesn't work because he himself would be using logic. No, he was sneakier than that. All he communicated to me were the words, "Logic doesn't work!" and left me to deduce the logical consequences of the lie with hope that somehow I would believe it.

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[37] J.R.R. Tolkien, The Lord Of The Rings, Part II; The Two Towers, Ballantine Publishers (1991), p. 234

Why would the idea, "Logic doesn't work" scare me so? What was behind it that gave it so much power to tempt me?
To start with the lion wanted me to believe the lie that God was out to deceive me. The lion wanted me to believe that it was he who was doing me the favor of uncovering the truth. And so he wanted me to think that I could not trust logic to discern the truth about God because God created the logical principles that my mind uses to function. These logical principles, the lion wanted me to believe, were flawed and biased in design so as to make God look good, but in reality He was evil. In short, the lion tried to lead me into thinking that I could not trust my brain because it was unfairly programmed to favor God in any argument.
Yet if I was to accept such a premise as: "logic doesn't work," where could I go? I would have become the lion's toy – a certifiable lunatic. I would come to believe that I couldn't use reason and understanding to come to different meaningful conclusions in science, art, philosophy, relationships, and morality. So why even be truthful?
I could sense the lion by the exertion of his limited power over my mind because of my illness.
So how would I combat this situation? With truth? Yes, truth is the light of God in a dark situation. The passage I used is the following spoken by Jesus shortly before His crucifixion:

I am the true vine,
and my Father is the vinedresser.
Every branch in me that bears no fruit
he cuts away,
and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes
to make it bear even more.
You are clean already,
by means of the word that I have spoken to you.
Remain in me, as I in you.
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,
unless it remains part of the vine,
neither can you unless you remain in me.
I am the Vine,
you are the branches.
Whoever remains in me with me in him,
bears fruit in plenty;
for cut off from me you can do nothing.[38]

The lion would entice me with the words: "Logic doesn't work", and I would be drawn to examine them. They sounded so plausible, so very wise while under the spell of his voice, yet they filled me with dread.
I would try to back away from his sugarcoated words, and instead recite the words recorded above by Jesus. I tried to find strength and support in them, and found just enough to get by until I was tempted again. Over and over again this happened to me – I

[38] John 15:1-5, Jerusalem Bible

could feel the lion's presence. The words of God were my strength (together with the prayers of the saints), but with the serpent's lies in my ears, God's word was far from comforting.
I still remember the lion's last attempt to persuade me of its lies, and the victory I had of pulling away from its enticing voice to rest in Jesus through faith – with the lion leaving. Afterwards, I told my godmother Anita about this experience, and she knew about it before I had said anything else. She knew about the struggle because she had been carrying me in her mind as a weight during this time. She had prayed to God for me during my temptation, and demanded of Satan to release my spirit from its chains. When the lion left, she said it was as though he was spit out of her mouth.
The chains that Anita mentioned here are the lies and deceptions that the demon tried to use on me. Blessed are those who desire to love, and to live in truth and freedom; and are willing to persevere through those obstacles in the way.
Later on when my illness grew worse the demons would try other games of deception in an attempt to get me to quit following Jesus.

Chapter 8

THE MARCH TOWARDS DESOLATION

It is both difficult and embarrassing to relate to you the events that started around May and ended in August of 1993. Difficult, because the experience was painful, and events happened too quickly. Embarrassing, because of some of the things I did during this time. In addition to this, it was also an adventure because to me my illness was still a mystery that needed to be solved. Getting through this dilemma was a lot like me doing a difficult math problem – both required searching, knocking on a lot of doors, retracing one's steps, and praying to God for guidance.
The following monologue entitled, "Angel in the Fire", and subtitled, "In the Silence of Sorrow" was written by Frances J. Roberts as though he were God speaking. My mother sent it to me. The Lord impressed on my heart the last paragraph while I was in my office at UBC one day:

O my little one, you have not begun to fathom the depths of my love. You will only understand as you reach out to me from the depths of sorrow, trouble or heartbreak. For the deeper your need, the more abundantly I give. And there is no depth My love cannot plumb and no grief My comfort cannot assuage. You know me in part, and you look through a darkened glass because you have experienced in part. You have suffered in degrees but as you enter more deeply into the waters of suffering, you will come to realize that there is no limit to My understanding and no point at which you will ever be separated from the consolation of My Holy Spirit.

It is in the silence of sorrow that you will find My love most sweet. It is in the aloneness of grief that you will learn how rich is My companionship. You will know me, My child, in the brightness of my glory when I join you in the darkness of your desolation.

You have not reached that place? It will come; and when it comes, you will remember what I am telling you now, and you will not fear. You will instinctively know that the darkness has no power, and that human solitude is the counterpart of divine companionship, and you will move out of the shadow and into the sunlight as swiftly as revelation dispenses doubt and love displaces loss.[39]

One day in May 1993, I decided to search the Scriptures. As I turned the pages of First John and found what I was looking for, all of a sudden, the print came up at me off the page. The passage I was reading is:

Do not love the world
or what is in the world,
If anyone does the world,
the love of the Father finds no place in him,
because everything there is in the world –
disordered bodily desires,
disordered desires of the eyes,
pride in possession –
is not from the Father
but from the world.
And the world with all its disordered desires
is passing away.
But whoever does the will of God
remains for ever.[40]

I looked at the neighboring pages and the print on them became three dimensional – the print was granted depth. Then suddenly as the three-dimensionality appeared, it disappeared. I believe that this was God's way of telling me that He wanted me to walk in self-control (many years later I would realize that these verses had to do with not setting up idols in our hearts and hardening one's heart towards those we are supposed to love, especially God). Around this time I had not been hallucinating, nor was the demonic influencing me in any way.

A year and four months had passed since I became ill until it took a real turn for the worse. The silver lining in this dark cloud was that I finally started to have symptoms that I could describe to doctors, and which are normally attributable to a known illness. That doesn't mean that the demons weren't involved, they were.

Gradually demonic spirits began to pester me again. I remember one time in particular, when I had an appointment with Alex Angioli. When I got to his place I was harassed in two ways: (1) As I greeted Alex, both he and I were aware of a grin on my face. Yet inside I was disturbed and upset at the way the demonic was manhandling me. I knew the grin on my face was not mine. Alex even asked me why I had the grin on my face. I told

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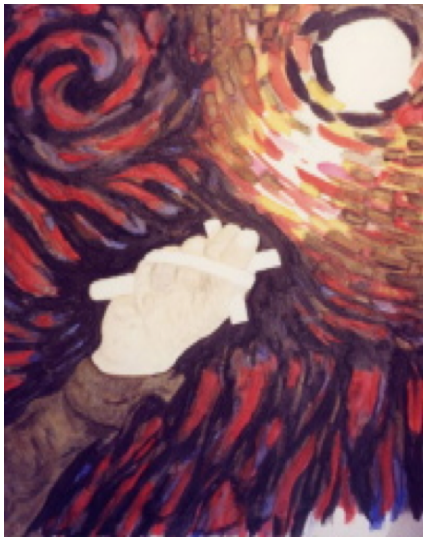
[39] I have been unable to discover the reference; however I'm sure that the author would rejoice in it being shared.

[40] 1 John 2:15-17, Jerusalem Bible

him it was not I. (2) A demon was constricting the tender nerve area in the chest. Alex took action immediately – he first lit a candle and then dealt with the demon(s) with his authority in Christ. This time I was not inhabited by a demon. The demons were merely attacking me from the outside through my undiagnosed illness.
As time went by, I gradually began to hallucinate. There is one instance that I remember well. I was lying on my bed in the Dempsters' house, and when I looked at my arm, it appeared to be much larger than it normally looked to my mind. My arm was not really swollen. I mistakenly concluded that the demonic was solely responsible for what I saw. I therefore did not mention it to anyone who possibly could have seen it for what it was – something also wrong with the brain.
It was during this time that I completed painting two pictures. They were It was Night II, and There is Light at the End of the Tunnel:



For better views of these pictures check out
the Artwork section from this Website.

The painting It was Night II is the sequel to It was Night I. Both are portraits of the crucified Christ but seen with different hearts. The first one depicted Jesus crucified, but without bruise, cut or scratch and reflected the shallowness of my faith at the time. The second portrait, painted much later, shows a more realistic crucified Christ – brutally beaten, bleeding, desolate, abandoned, in darkness – broken, yet full of grace, life and light. I had become more familiar with the suffering Christ because of my Journey through Darkness.
Because the Lord had used birds on two separate occasions as signs to encourage me, I began to wrongly think that He would use them to warn me when something was wrong. I thought that the signal God was using to warn me was the awful sounds that the crows made.
This combined with the fact that something (which I believe to be a demon) would come to rest on my head over and over again made it a ridiculous situation. These demons would leave every time they were told, but they kept coming back. I use to phone long distance to either Mom or Anita on a regular basis to deal with this. My life was falling

apart again.
As this trouble escalated, I felt that I was approaching a climax of some sort! As I came to certain conclusions whether by help of Alex Angioli or by going through Scripture by myself, things lined up in my brain. I actually felt physical sensations in the parts of the brain where this was occurring.
The last time this happened to me was when I was in my bedroom, on the floor reading my Bible. When I came to a certain conclusion I was very surprised – my brain began to work again, although not fully. I thought that this was it – "I'm almost healthy again, tomorrow I'll be completely healthy."
I woke up the next morning in desolation; my spirit – body connection was laid to waste. My awareness of my surroundings was diminished. My emotions were flattened. The subtler or finer capacity for creativeness, and expression of emotion was lost. The attacks around the throat also began again. An enormous weight was added to my consciousness. Something that I would always identify as a demon began to wrestle my mind and therefore my body down into darkness and inactivity. This weight would get much heavier before it began to diminish.
I had smell, taste, touch, and sight hallucinations. I didn't hear voices as is common with most people who have this illness. I had plenty of paradigm shifts – something tinkered with my perceptions of reality regularly. I lost complete feeling in the sensitive area where the nerves are concentrated in the chest.
I was immersed into a darkness and suffering beyond my previous imagination. I had no idea that it could get this bad until I experienced it myself. I was in a land visited by few, and those who do visit it for a time are normally considered crazy in the head by society. The environment where my consciousness lived was barren, dry and dark and I only felt the presence of scorpions, and vipers (known as demons). I felt like God had abandoned me yet once again.
Saint John of the Cross describes the inner workings of my soul at this time really rather well:

In the substance of the soul they suffer abandonment, supreme poverty, dryness, cold, and sometimes heat. They find relief in nothing nor does any thought console them, nor can they even raise their hearts to God, so oppressed are they by this flame.[41]

And again, he states more personally:

Poor, abandoned, and unsupported by any of the apprehensions of my soul (in the darkness of my intellect, the distress of my will, and the affliction and anguish of my memory), left to darkness in pure faith... [and in hope to march on to the dawn].[42]

When St. John of the Cross says that one is "unsupported by any of the apprehensions" in one's soul in this Night. He concludes that one is left to lean on one's faith in order to

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[41] K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works Of St. John Of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), pp. 648-649, or F. 1. 20.
[42] K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works Of St. John Of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), p. 400, or N. 2. 4. 1.

navigate through this terrible darkness. This darkness tests one through the intellect, will, and memory. This is because the intellect does not see past the bends ahead in the road; the will is rudely being exercised to chose between love and instant gratification; and the person's memory brings into question the goodness of God because of past hardships. All of this slowly exercises and strengthens one's muscles of love in the heart if one remains committed to following Christ through this crisis and on into the light.
As Laurens Van der Post wrote:

Ride, ride through the day,
Ride through the moonlight,
Ride, ride through the night,
For far in the distance burns the fire,
For someone who has waited so long.

I rode all through the day,
I rode all through the moonlight,
I rode all through the night,
To the fire in the distance burning.
And beside the fire found
He who had waited so long[43]

It would appear that there is a decrease in light from line to line in the poem above. Note the progression in the light given – day, moonlight, starlight, fire in the distance burning, and finally Jesus. God was moving me to depend more on Him and less on natural light. My circumstances may have gotten darker, but the Light within my heart grew brighter. On one of the occasions that I phoned home to Mom because of my perplexities, she greeted me with the good news that the Lord had given her a word of knowledge concerning me. It was:

The Lord will comfort His people; He will have
pity on their suffering.
But the people of Jerusalem said,
'The Lord has abandoned us, He has forgotten us,'
so the Lord answers,
'Can a woman forget her baby and not love the
child she bore?
Even if a mother should forget you
I will never forget you.
I can never forget you, I have written your
name on the palm of my hand.
Those who will rebuild you are coming
soon.
And those who destroyed you
will leave.'[44]

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[43] Laurens Van der Post, The Seed And The Sower, Penguin (1966), pp. 119-120

This restored some hope and a degree of sanity to my life again! Afterwards, Mom sent me this passage. The last verse was very reassuring. It spoke of help on the way, and those entities called demons that would eventually leave me alone – they weren't a figment of my imagination. And since God gave me these words through my Mom, He was admitting to the reality of demons in my illness, because He said that those who destroyed me would leave!

Part III

INTO FREEDOM

I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. (Isaiah 42:16)

Blessed are all who wait for Him. (Isaiah 30:18d)

So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. (John 8:36)

[A] woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on…[Jesus'] head. (Mark 14:3) [I want to be like that alabaster jar]

Chapter 9

START TO RECOVERY

I received the following verse from my mother, and what it advises is quite literally what I did until I got diagnosed, and what I would continue to do on into the future.

You will be right to depend on prophecy, take it as a lamp for lighting a way through the dark until dawn comes and the morning star rises in your mind.[45]

The morning star would also rise in my soul. By this I mean that the breath and warmth of life would slowly return to my body. I would also become familiar with a less distorted image of who God is because of my suffering.
As I became more and more undone by my circumstances, I was on UBC campus during

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[44] Isaiah 49:13-17, Uncertain of where the translation comes from. (Underline Mom's)
[45] 2 Peter 1:19. (Uncertain of where the translation comes from. It probably comes from a Living With Christ booklet.)

the week as usual, and I happen to see Dr. Pullmer on a walk. That day I phoned my godmother Anita, and one of the things I told her was that I had seen Dr. Pullmer. Anita right there asked God if I ought to make another appointment with Dr. Pullmer, and the answer was a resounding YES!

This time I told Dr. Pullmer my symptoms more clearly, and he immediately knew I had schizophrenia, provided I did not have a brain tumor. I went for tests at UBC Hospital and had an EEG and a CAT scan done to me. These confirmed schizophrenia. Consequently in early August of 1993, he put me on an anti-psychotic medication called Stelazine.

I went back to Alberta to visit my parents in mid August, and when I got back I reported that the Stelazine worked a little bit, but not completely. In early September there was an opening at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH), and so I was admitted to the psychiatric ward. This allowed the doctors to try stronger doses of medication and observe me.

As usual, my friend Alex Pruss still phoned me nearly every evening. We always had something to say, for the longest time we would pray the Lord's Prayer together, and recite Mary's song:

My soul glorifies the Lord
  and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful
  of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
  for the Mighty One has done great

things for me– holy is his name.
His mercy extends to those who fear him,
  from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
  he has scattered those who are proud

in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones
  but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
  but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel,
  remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants for ever,
even as he said to our fathers.[46]

Because I only got partial results with the Stelazine they switched me to Loxapine, Procyclodine, and Tegredol. Because the Loxapine had a tranquilizing effect on me, my symptoms became worse to the point of experiencing what I'd call Hell, so they put me on Risperdal.

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[46] Luke 1:46-55

The attacks around the head ceased but not the attacks around the throat. Because the medication was so expensive, the doctors decided to let me attend a Mental Health Team. The Team would pay for my medications, and help me in many more ways. I was at VGH for a total of three months.

As I learnt to walk in this darkness, which was beyond description, I began to learn a lot more about the perseverance Job had. Since I now knew what was wrong with me, and because the Mental Health Team required it, I stopped seeing Alex Angioli for counseling.

It was a matter of carrying my burden or cross as best I could. The promises from God would become my hope in a deeper way! Who hopes for what they already have? For although I saw I was on my way to recovery, it came ever so slowly. It would take many more years before I would begin to see Light faintly at the end of the tunnel.

I would make many mistakes, have some real disappointments, and would struggle with the bitterness of my cup or circumstances for years. God used this to show me what was in my heart. And it wasn't too pretty. I would recount years later how I told God before my Journey through Darkness started that I only wanted to do His will. I had no idea until the storm rocked my foundations just how unpleasant doing God's will could be.

Through the encouragement and prayers from the saints, my hope would eventually grow to healthy proportions. It also grew because I interpreted my illness as having a purpose – that is, to humble me! I would also become certain of the hope that Job had when he said:

I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
I myself will see him with my own eyes–I,
and not another.
How my heart yearns within me![47]

As time went on, the words "hope" and "faith" also took on new meaning for me. Hope and faith are inseparably linked – Hebrews 11:1 records that faith is being sure of what you hope for. The question then becomes: "What is hope?" A common lexicon describes hope as a feeling or expectation that something desirable will happen. There is another meaning that I naturally attribute to the word "hope". It is a weaker definition, namely, "to wish for, long for, desire, or want."

As the darkness increased, the hope I felt could best be described by the weaker definition. As the light increased, the hope I felt fit the stronger definition better. The difference in the two ways came from the sort of evidence my intellect had at the time. The amount of certainty one feels about a particular hope dictates how much faith one has in the expectation becoming reality. This is a deceptive thing to measure! It doesn't matter how much emotion is tied up in our sureness of hope, or our faith, as the emotion can dry up depending on how dark or bad the circumstances get!

Light and good circumstances are not always the same thing. If the body, intellect, and spirit of a person are properly connected and there is no other interference in the

[47] Job 19:25-27

cognitive process, the light and hope felt can be strong even though the circumstances are hard. When this happens, one knows that one's faith can weather the storm.
So what exactly was I putting my hope or faith in? From a position of ignorance (and not having appropriate definitions for good and evil) it is possible to be troubled with whether God is either good, or evil; or to have a mixture of these two character traits. That was my fate for many years. It takes faith to believe any one of these possibilities. For me at least, the greatest evidence of God's goodness during my Journey through Darkness was the mixture of good and evil within me. The selfishness, pride, lack of love, demanding-ness, and lack of self control versus the conflicting desire within to live up to what I perceived as Truth, Light, Goodness, Beauty, Life, and Love.
These good qualities I saw as being rooted in God because of His call, my conversion, and His discipline on my life. Evil I saw as a perversion of these good attributes, and so could not be absolute, complete, whole or entire, perfect or pure. Only God is absolute, and therefore eternal![48] With correct Biblical definitions for good and evil God's goodness is not too hard to see so that the fears will evaporate. This has been my experience.

The Describable Symptoms:

As I became healthier, my illness changed too. At first I could feel something wrestle my mind into darkness, and my body towards the ground. I felt like an old man, heavy, stiff and weak in the joints; I could only go for very short walks. This together with a side effect from my medications contributed towards me putting on a lot of weight. Exercise became a torture.
This darkness grew and grew the more my brain began to work until it reached its peak and then began to diminish, but ever so slowly – it would take the duration of the active phase of my illness for this to work itself out. My perceptions of things from a physical, intellectual, and emotional standpoint were controlled continually by something trying to deceive me. I felt oppressed. For the longest time I would feel like a gutted fish. Things that were true appeared false, and vice-versa! Every time this happened, I would have to tell myself to wait for the deception to pass, and not to draw any rash conclusions. Many of the deceptions didn't even make sense when I was in my proper mind. Some deceptions were heavily imprinted on my mind for years, and I decided not to accept them because of my commitment to the truth that I could remember believing when my mind was functioning normally. This exercises one's faith and wisdom.
Some examples: On one occasion something tried to persuade me that I was receiving messages (that aren't there) from a TV – this I rejected. On another occasion, something tried to deceive me into thinking that I knew a person's thoughts before they spoke them – this I rejected. This had nothing to do with extrapolating on what was already said by the other person. The person had said nothing for me to tell what he was thinking. Something tried to impose a racist attitude towards Chinese people in my heart – this I rejected. On many occasions I had to fight off the strong delusion that matter was conscious, could be considered as God because it was everywhere, and therefore was worthy of worship. This delusion made perfect sense to my impaired mind during the temptations that were repeated over many years, but I rejected it purely because of my

[48] An in-depth argument for the existence of an Absolutely good God can be found in C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, Published by Simon & Schuster New York, ©1980,

faith in the living God.
For many years something consistently tried to delude me into thinking that the Judaeo-Christian God could not be known – this I rejected. Something continually tried to impress on me to command the Holy Spirit within me to leave – this I rejected over and over again! This was very alarming until I got used to it. Many times the horrible thought, "Leave, Holy Spirit" would come into my mind. I knew that this could not be me, but it still unsettled me.
People's faces including my own would be made to look extremely beautiful or ugly in my mind's eye depending on my motives or circumstances. Everyone's physical proportions, including my own, would change in my mind's eye – one moment they would look very skinny and the next moment very fat. I could no longer trust my sense of smell – most of the time I could not smell pleasant fragrances; at times I was aware of unpleasant odor that no one else could smell. Neither could I trust my ability to taste – food became bland. My sexual desires disappeared, and then slowly came back.
My ability to listen to, appreciate and understand beautiful and meaningful melodies and rhythms found in music precious to me was also altered, distorted, or taken away from me through my schizophrenia.
I would have to compensate for my loss of personality and life skills with brute force because many parts of my soul or brain were cut off from me. My confidence dropped in my ability to do all sorts of tasks that used to come naturally. I had loss of memory. My outlook on life was always made to be bleak, and this challenged my faith in all sorts of ways.
I also had many attacks around my throat – it got so bad that at times I could not breathe (even my doctor said they weren't panic attacks). The demons tried to confuse me into thinking that I wanted them to inhabit me by repeating the words, "Come in [you demons]" in my mind, when I was attacked around the throat by them. It disturbed me that I had these ideas in my head when this was happening, but I just had to persevere through it each time it happened. God was faithful.
I had flatness of emotions, about the only emotions I did have were of great fear and deep sadness. Surprisingly, I could not cry. My creativeness, and mathematical intuition disappeared, and so I had to quit school. Thankfully there were times when I could paint with watercolors, but this was very rare. At first there was no feeling in my chest (it was as though the nerves were dead), but after two years on medication sensation began to return. I felt hollow like bamboo for the longest time. Unable to take consolation in much.
Initially, because I was so oppressed, and couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel. I lost my confidence in going to Heaven if I were to die. I also lost my confidence that things would work out in my life here on earth and I felt massively insecure. I would try to sleep as much as possible because I dreaded waking up to my circumstances. It felt like God had abandoned me (but I believed He was with me). Later on I began to fantasize about going to Heaven. I got depressed because of the way I viewed my lot in life, but I wasn't tempted to commit suicide. My doctor then put me on an antidepressant and this helped somewhat.
I could take no pleasure in the usual joys of life. The environment in which my

consciousness was submerged within my mind was a dry barren desert.[49] It was a weary and burdensome journey done in utter weakness, and blindness. My instinct for survival motivated me to reaction as opposed to action. I was always exhausted and emotionally drained (with the little emotion that I did have) from being pushed to the edge moment after moment, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. My consciousness was full of discomfort, distress, hurt, suffering, agony, and torment. Something was torturing me.

Imagine a corpse tightly attached to a living person by cords of rope. This was done in ancient times to kill people. The rotting flesh would eat into the flesh of the living person causing disease and making the person die a cruel, slow death. Now imagine something similar – a demon of death, and immorality attaching itself to my mind because of my schizophrenia.[50] Would my spiritual life die because of the intensified deception, moral decay and perverted allurement implanted in my thought life by this messenger of Satan, or would I be humbled by the experience? That's what I faced on and off for the duration of the active phase of my illness.

I became painstakingly aware of loss – loss of my quality of life.[51] When anyone loved me through any act of kindness (which was gladly accepted), it felt out of place given the tunnel vision imposed on my mind and my harsh circumstances.

I still remember how disturbed my soul was within me during this time – full of apprehension, uncertainty, fear and an infant's hope. The Psalmist put it well:

Why are you so down cast, O my soul,
why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God, for I will
yet praise him, my savior and my God.[52]

Despite the fact that the promise made sense – to be broken into Freedom – at times it seemed "crazy" to believe that Freedom would come through brokenness. The road I was traveling on did not look like it would lead to peace and righteousness. Most of the time I felt weak, helpless, insecure and stretched out–not capable of doing even the simplest of household duties without the greatest of efforts. Because of this I cooked the simplest of meals only when I had the energy to do so. I felt deeply frustrated because I also expected that I would grow in love over time. And that didn't seem to becoming true. I told myself that I needed to wait for more mental health to be restored to me before I would see God's promise of Freedom to love others and myself meaningfully from my heart fulfilled in my life.

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[49] The loss of ability to experience pleasurable emotions is the condition called Anhedonia, and is a major symptom of schizophrenia. Cf. Schizophrenia Digest, Magpie Publishing, Volume 8, Issue 4, October/ November 2001, p. 8

[50] St. John of the Cross speaks about evil spirits being sent to some people in the Dark Night, not to destroy their faith but to try them. Cf. K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works Of St. John Of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), p. 393, or N. 1. 14. 3

[51] Cf. Matthew 10:39

[52] Psalm 42:5

Instead of seeing a harvest of good fruit because of my suffering I saw barren branches. I felt like Saint Paul when he said: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."[53] Because of this, on numerous occasions, I called myself "crazy" for believing God's promises.
Because I felt such stifling demonic influences at the time, and because my brain was not working fully, I was not conscious of anything pure within me, including God.
It takes time to make a tree really good, and once it is really good then it starts to bear much good fruit.

Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.[54]

We don't make a bad tree good by picking its fruit off. We make it good by dealing with the roots.[55] The first part of the promise had come true – to be broken, and after all, God did initiate it, so who was I to question Him if indeed He has unfathomable understanding. Charles Péguy said:

[Hope] is the source of life, for she is the one who constantly breaks habits. She is the germ of spiritual birth. She is the spring and the giving forth of grace, for she is the one who constantly strips away that deadly surface of habit.[56]

One can easily replace the word "Hope" with the word "God" in this quotation, for God is our hope. Although I could not see it at the time, beneath my immediate consciousness, hope was constantly stripping away the corruption in my spirit. And since it was my faith in the past that sustained my hope in the future, one could say that it was faith in God's goodness that would eventually purify me.
Hope is so universal that even God hopes! We see this when we acknowledge He is love, and, as First Corinthians 13:7 says, "Love hopes all things."
Hope involves waiting, and waiting is always active. With some people their hope and therefore their faith perish because the wait is too long as in the parable of the ten virgins found in Matthew 25. Here is the parable:

"At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any [additional] oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.
"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!'
"Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.'
" 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those

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[53] Romans 7:15
[54] Matthew 12:33
[55] Cf. John & Paula Sandford, Healing The Wounded Spirit, Victory House (1985), p. 37
[56] David Aikman, Hope: The Hearts Great Quest, Vine Books (1995), p. 139

who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.'
"But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut.
"Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!'
"But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'
"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.[57]

The word "virgin" is symbolic of purity in this parable. And so all ten virgins initially belong to God. As the virgins wait they all foolishly fall asleep and in the process waste the precious oil in their lamps. They are then rudely awakened at midnight – a time of darkness and trial. The promise then goes out that the bridegroom is on His way. The foolish virgins initially had the commitment to overcome their earlier trials and temptations since they had an initial supply of oil in their lamps. But as they progress it becomes evident that their hearts did not have the critical amount of commitment required to hold onto the promise and persevere through the darkness. The promise was that Jesus the Bridegroom is on His way. The foolish virgins had neglected to sell all of their earthly treasures in order to purchase more of the precious oil required to light their lamps that would have helped them await the bridegroom on into the night. The wise virgins had extra oil, and so could await the bridegroom on into the night.
The oil in the parable represents the virgins' commitment to God. Without it they could not have braved the darkness. This oil of commitment burns together with the breath of life to make the light of the Gospel. The light of the Gospel is love. The foolish virgins gave up their commitment to God and so could no longer love or bear light during the darkest time of their lives. They couldn't summon the faith to believe that the bridegroom was on His way during the darkest time of their lives. This is realized when the call goes out at midnight that the bridegroom is on his way. Inside each one of the foolish virgins there was a part of them that wanted to continue waiting for the bridegroom since they ask the wise virgins for more oil. But a still larger part inside each of them did not want to pay the price, and so they went into the city abandoning the wait for Jesus' arrival. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."[58] The foolish virgins had divided hearts and so could not patiently await the bridegroom. It takes wisdom to know how to wait. Jesus knew how to wait for His crucifixion. He did not waste a moment. He was creative, for love is always creative and constructive. In response to me living out the parable of the ten virgins, I painted two pictures below that I entitled, "The Ten Virgins I, and II" respectively:

[57] Matthew 25:1-13, Note: Adding the word "additional" is contextually justified in this parable, because each virgin had an initial supply of oil. If you don't believe me, look where the foolish virgins say, "our lamps are going out". The lamps can't go out unless they had some oil to begin with.
[58] Matthew 6:21

For a better view of these paintings check out the Artwork section from this Website.

It is said that blessings come to those who wait. A more accurate statement would be to replace the word "wait" with the word "search." This is especially true when we talk about perfecting an aptitude whether it is in sport, music, art, philosophy, or even a trade (not to mention skills involved in building relationships). Searching indicates that our faith is active. But what happens when one becomes disabled like I was here? Saint John of the Cross calls this situation the Passive Night in his work entitled The Dark Night. He calls it passive because he claims that we aren't called to pursue doing good works during this time as much as to passively receive from God through our suffering infused Love. Either way, one has to do something with one's time. Whatever one does one shouldn't relieve one's pain and suffering through immoral means. To top this off, very little besides eating and sleeping will give pleasure during this time. And it is not wise to spend all of one's time doing this! The state of the mind and body, combined with what one is waiting for dictates how one should wait. One needs wisdom to decide what to do for God, others, and oneself!

Practically speaking, doing one's duty is what one should aim for. Simple hobbies are what I used to pass my leisure time. I also recommend regular light exercise. And don't give up the practice of prayer. The New Testament tells us to constantly pray. Prayer is much more than making requests for people from long lists. Prayer for the Christian has to do with building a better relationship with God. It involves listening when God talks; worshipping Him and Him alone; remaining committed to Him through periods of dryness and darkness; and searching for things to be thankful for from Him all the time. It means being committed to not partaking in the sins we are aware of if at all possible, and becoming dependent on God through trust for our needs. This can be very difficult. Don't give up even when circumstances seem to point to a God who doesn't care for you. Don't expect too much from meditation until you are slowly moving out of the darkness and into the light.

Another thing hope can do is to humble us. When we hope in God we are actively expecting from Him. When we expect from God we have to admit our own poverty, and this aids our humility if we decide God knows what is best for us, while we seek to become dependent on Him. If we start to demand from God because of our hope then we are becoming proud. It has been said that Satan builds one up so that he can tear one down. It is also said that God tears one down so that He can build one up.

William Law said, "you can have no greater sign of a confirmed pride than when you

think you are humble enough."[59] It is this smug disposition of being too pleased with one's own goodness that God despises. That is why He brings us through seasons of humbling, and exalting. When God has humbled some one in character, the humility gained by the person becomes a priceless gift that motivates acts of love in cooperation with God.

Our hearts are prepared in fall, stretched and broken in winter, given new life in spring, and satisfied in summer. When we humble ourselves, God is not long in lifting us up. And this is what is happening when the elders, as recorded in Revelation 4:9-11, lay their crowns before the throne of God out of humility and worship. Each time they do this, God exalts them and places their crowns back on their heads. By exalt I mean to be raised higher in rank, honor, power, understanding, character, and quality.

I've spoken about my struggles with hope and faith in God's promises, but very little about my seemingly stunted love. That's because at this point in time, I still considered myself to be a beginner when it came to love. One verse I took a liking to during my Dark Journey is the following:

Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by
  the gazelles, and the does of the field:
Do not arouse or awaken love
  until it so desires.[60]

It brought hope and faith to me that one day I would love others maturely. This is because it did not appear that I was growing in the art or skill of love as time went by. I seemed to be going backwards instead. The reason is I learned to do many behaviors that became habits through this trial that were destructive.

I felt a sense of powerlessness over them and my circumstances. I was unable to feel any kindness or compassion towards others, but I was kind to them whenever I met them. I isolated myself, not feeling comfortable around others. I just wasn't ready, or confident enough to come out of myself.

Yes, I did go to church, and Bible studies regularly; and I even went to a Twelve Step group for a while. Others had smiles on their faces because of pleasant emotions created by community. I felt little good about myself, and hungered for what others had. I lacked confidence in my ability to interact with others in a more responsive, loving, and in-depth way. I had to interact with brute force, mechanically, and without flow.

Although this got slowly better after many years on medication, there was still a significant deficiency in me when loving others deeply from the heart. I felt like a piano player trying to play beautiful music while having extra thick rubber gloves on my hands. I felt weak, restricted, burdened, heavy, clumsy, and unskilled. These rubber gloves would later be removed in an unsuspecting way. When God gives a great gift, He does so in a way that will bring Him glory. He does so in a way that exercises our faith, so that we will not discard His gifts for something else because of our immaturity. Maturity is acquired through testing or suffering and not given with out pain as a gift. I could not force this process. Nor could I force, awaken or arouse the love that God said He was

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[59] C.S. Lewis, The Problem Of Pain, Fontane Books (1973), p. 43

[60] Song of Songs 2:7

digging tunnels of in my heart.
This called for patience, one of the few observable characteristics of love in me at the time. "Love is patient." It also calls for endurance. "Love always perseveres." Love carries on even when there is no joy or delight in doing so – remember Jesus crucified. Love is prompted by hope, because it sees into the future enabling us to sacrifice now for the joy later on. Not all loving is distasteful, especially if there is joy fueling it.
Since love carries on even when there is no joy or delight in it any more, explains why in my early Christian walk I did not persevere. Learning to love is difficult. There are always new things to learn and do.
How to form a healthy desire to love that prompts or motivates us to good deeds was a puzzle to me for a long time. Later on I found that one of the building blocks has to do with how we repent. We usually do one of two things. Dr. Larry Crabb wrote:

With the awareness of failure I could have moved either toward self-hatred leading to angry pressure or to self-judgment leading to confession and dependence.[61]

Let me explain the significance of this statement. The first thing we may be tempted to do after we sin is to despise ourselves. This then fuels anger. But the Bible says, "[human] anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."[62] This anger, if we have it, then fuels inward pressure to improve. This pressure accomplishes nothing worthwhile, it only destroys the peace we may have had, and the presence of God we may have felt. In effect, it is what the proud do because they are trying to sanctify themselves all by themselves. It ignores God and His grace!
The second way indicated above is the correct way of inviting change. It first involves recognition that we are in the wrong when we sin. The response to this recognition is to humbly confess our faults to God. And God who is gentle and understanding will forgive us. This will deal a deathblow to our guilt, and First John 1:9 promises us that "[God] will cleanse us from all evil." We then depend on God's grace by submitting our wills to His newly each day afterwards. The result is a greater desire to do God's will, and therefore Freedom to grow more deeply in loving others.
Another important insight, one that I learned from pastor Ken Blue, the main speaker at the Overflowing Grace Conference in 1992, that I attended, is this. Suppose that one has a weakness that one considers to be sinful. One might invest much energy into overcoming this sin and as a result land up going through the following cycle: (1) commit the sin; (2) get angry at oneself for sinning; (3) use the guilt and anger to motivate oneself to not doing the sin again; (4) go for a week of not doing that particular sin, and feeling a little better; (5) go two weeks and a day not doing that sin, and feeling even better; (6) start feeling on top of the world about one's effort and performance after three weeks of not sinning; (7) and then fall into sin again despite the effort and short term success.
What is happening here? Why the failure? If we do go through this cycle, then we are attempting to use guilt to stop us from sinning, and when we start to feel good, the guilt starts to evaporate, and so our motivation to continue in not committing a particular sin also begins to evaporate until it is nonexistent; thus the recommitting of that particular

[61] Larry Crabb, Finding God, Zondervan Publishers (1993), p. 132
[62] James 1:20

sin.
If one wants to no longer do a particular sin with more success, then one will have to find a better approach. This approach is found in the chapter entitled Working The Twelve (Plus Four) Steps found in this book.

Chapter 10

ANTICIPATING FREEDOM

Imagine being in a foreign country where your daily wages are, "the bread of adversity and the water of affliction."[63] For the most part you are absorbed by your sufferings, yet lurking back in your memory is the Promised Land. News then comes to you that you will return to it because God in His mercy and compassion has decided to release you from your captivity. Your time of exile is done! This is the way it was for me, at least on the surface.
The journey from exile to the Promised Land was more difficult than the exile, and longer in duration too. There were many dangers on this journey, and I always felt this deep sadness resting over my soul. The healthier I became, the more personality traits re-surfaced, and sometimes I had moments of happiness. I became more assertive, and could laugh at jokes as time went on, but even this did not lift the sadness clouding my mind. I had lost the joy of God's salvation. Only the Lord could restore this. Along with this I had lost the sense of God's presence that surrounded me before the Dark Journey ensued. I lost the joy of God's salvation because I let Satan steal it. My limited view on God's love, provision, and riches led me to worry, struggle, and fret over the future I might have, and robbed me of the joy God had given me before.
There is a slight difference for me in the use of the two words: "happy" and "joy." Happiness has something to do with one's circumstances. "Joy on the other hand is rooted in the heart. Happiness is in the mind. Pleasure is in the body."[64] One can be joyful even if one's circumstances are bad. Joy comes from the meaning and purpose that God gives us. Joy also comes from a clean conscience. All of these things can be difficult to judge or measure. As Christians there can be at least two major disrupters of joy: they are a crisis in faith, and not turning away from sins of omission, or commission.
At first I thought that it would take almost no time to recover from my illness. As I grew impatient I mentioned this to Dr. Duke at VGH. She told me it normally took a year or so to recover from the illness, but since I wasn't diagnosed early enough, it might take longer. This was sad news. It took much longer than a year; it took at least nine years after diagnosis, before I considered myself to have escaped from the worst parts from my Dark Journey.
Since this was a dark and arduous journey, I was tempted to fall into despair, self-pity, and bitterness many times because circumstances often appeared upside down in my life. After the Scriptures stopped being so bitter, the Bible once again began to soothe my

[63] Cf. Isaiah 30:20
[64] Peter Herbeck

stretching soul. I would use Scripture as a rampart from which to fight off the darkness and despair, and therefore advance to Freedom.
"What would Freedom be like?" I would ask myself over and over again. I knew that Freedom involved majoring on the important sayings of Jesus. And later on I would come to realize that it did not mean majoring on endless and for the most part useless disputes between different Christian denominations. If we focus only on what separates us, we will always be divided, and never accomplish what God intends us to do.
The forces of darkness, those that tried to destroy me, would leave according to Isaiah 49:17 which says: "And those who destroyed you will leave", as God had indicated to my mother. As far as Freedom from sin is concerned, I knew that I would never be absolutely Free from it in this life. It was a matter of degree.
Freedom for most of us comes from a process of growing. God is the one who initiates it by granting us faith in His goodness, and because of our faith in Him He can separate the light from the darkness in our hearts. He purifies us through faith in Him, making us strong, and confident of His goodness. We can overcome all obstacles through perseverance prompted by hope, faith sustained by courage, and love supported by willingness.
One of the most Freeing biblical statements is the following written by the apostle Paul:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions–it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith–and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God– not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.[65]

The best expression of release into Freedom that I've come across not in the Bible is the dialogue between Sam and Gandalf in The Lord Of The Rings, after they accomplished their tasks and came out of deep darkness and near despair:

'Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?' [asked Sam]
'A great shadow has departed,' said Gandalf and then he laughed, and the sound was like music, or like water in a parched land; and as he listened the thought came to Sam that he had not heard laughter, the pure sound of merriment, for days without count. It fell upon his ears like the echo of all the joys he had ever known. But he himself burst into tears. Then, as a sweet rain will pass down a wind of spring and the sun will shine the clearer, his tears ceased, and his laughter welled up, and laughing he sprang up from his bed. 'How do I feel?' he cried. 'Well, I don't know how to say it. I feel, I feel' he waved his arms in the air – 'I feel like spring after winter, and sun on the leaves; and like trumpets and harps and all the songs I have ever heard!'[66]

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[65] Ephesians 2:4-10
[66] J.R.R Tolkien, The Lord Of The Rings, Part III; The Return Of The King, Ballantine Publishers (1991), p. 283

This is what I cry out for – Freedom! Indeed at the bottom of every heart there exists this yearning for Freedom. The problem is we are so often deceived about how to walk in it. We walk in it with a faith that helps us to practice humility.
The fact that the path to life often feels like the path to death, and that the path to death can feel like the path to life should cause some to be alarmed, and others to rejoice.[67]
During my Dark Journey, an incident occurred to me while on UBC campus having coffee with the leader from UCM, Kevin. As we were talking to each other, I noticed a pigeon making its way towards us on the ground. People kept walking by, and one person walked by in such a direction as to drive the bird away from us. But it was a persistent bird. It came right up to us, and the instant I said the word Freedom in a sentence to Kevin, the pigeon flapped its powerful wings and burst noisily into the air. It was quite the sight. The bird became an expression of Freedom for me.
We have all come across the irreversibility of death. Something dies, and nothing we do can bring it back to life again – the doors seemingly close. When I first became ill I had a difficult time summoning the courage to believe all that the word Freedom conveyed in the promise God had given me. But like all things that grow, my faith went through the many stages as outlined in this book.
As the Night grew darker, and my cross grew heavier, death of plans, loss of friends, and waste of potential seemed to multiply. The lion could easily explain these things – "Death, death, and more death are your wages!" Perhaps for a while I thought. But I had nowhere else to go, so I hoped against hope. Gradually, the thing that most realistically came to depict my hope and faith in this promised Freedom was my hope and faith in the Resurrection of Jesus.
There were times during my Dark Journey when I read the Resurrection narratives, and they filled me with such hope and anticipation of being joyously resurrected into Freedom like Jesus was. Despite all the darkness, pain, and suffering I went through, nothing compares to the emotions surrounding the longing created by it. This longing and expectation grew in me just as surely as spring follows winter, or growth follows rain. Because there was so much darkness, the Light shone the brighter!
As I got healthier, I kept on asking myself what Freedom would look like, and as a result I composed the following poem in anticipation of it:

Freedom

Freedom is like an Eagle soaring in the heavens
Or a horse galloping in the meadows
I am Freedom dispensing grace to a world in need
I am your God and have set you Free to more deeply
love me
Through storms and tribulations you have come
You became blind so that you could see
I became deaf so that you could hear
In sorrow and grief you reached out to me –

[67] Cf. Larry Crabb, Inside Out, NavPress (1988), p. 92

Freedom indeed
I am Freedom, I am Life
And I am the one who set you Free to more deeply
love me

This is the essence of why God broke me. Pride, envy, selfishness, hatred, insensitivity, impatience, gullibility, ambition, lust, greed, and laziness among other sins were in my heart hindering me from loving my God, my neighbor, and myself. These sinful attitudes are what God broke in me so that I could more deeply love Him in Himself, and in His most distressing disguise! And by saying that Jesus appears in a distressing disguise, I mean that He appears to us as those most in need of love.
Given the length of years that I landed up having to suffer before I was set Free (in part because the medication I was on worked ever so slowly). One person stated that after I became ill, God could not heal me because I stayed proud. He said that if I had of humbled myself right after I became ill, then God would have healed me instantly. In other words, he said that there was no reason for me to wait year after year before I was restored. Here is my response to this critique…
Consider the following analogy. Imagine a Hockey team with a roster of 22 players. But with one of the players not up to par as far as strength, stamina, and skill level are concerned. Instead of being an asset to the team, this player will actually weaken the team considerably. The player will get in the way of plays that need speed, quick passing, and good play making ability. If the coach is one that wants his team to improve and win games, then he will have to cut the weaker player off the team until he or she is up to snuff. If the weaker player has potential, then the coach (like God) will send the weaker player through a grueling camp meant to improve his or her conditioning and skill level. It won't be an over night success. It might take many months or years before the camp has a chance of paying off. And in many ways the weaker player will have a say in whether or not he or she will want to submit to these terms and make it through the camp and onto the team again. It will depend on just how hungry or motivated the weaker player is if he or she is to play on the team again.
In the same way, God who is wise and loving, is not just interested in short term success. He is much more interested in the long-term success for all of His children. God's desire for holiness in myself, meant that I needed to go through a grueling spiritual camp, that would improve my spiritual conditioning, and eventually through acquiring certain skills make me useful in His plans for good.

Chapter 11

FROM DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT

This chapter could easily be named: "Cleaning The Inside Of The Cup" because as God cleaned me up I moved from darkness into the light.
The following New Testament command (or promise) sums up my hopes, expectations and longings during my Dark Journey, and after it.

As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience.[68]

My reasoning was that when God commands us to do something He always provides a way to do it either now or in the future. We might now do imperfectly, but when God is done with us, perfectly. This is part of what sustained me in my time of trial – the promise to be clothed as God Himself is clothed in Christ Jesus.
Elisabeth Kübler-Ross wrote in 1969, "There is not much sense in suffering, since drugs can be given for pain, itching, and other discomforts. The belief has long died that suffering here on earth will be rewarded in heaven. Suffering has lost its meaning."[69] Is this true? What about my Dark Journey, was it all for nothing? Although it took a long time to see the changes in me that God had promised (and at times I wondered if the only changes in me would be those in my theology) there are changes to report. To illustrate this I would like to share with you two poems, the first written in 1984 before I renewed my walk with Jesus, and the second written in December of 1998, long before the completion of my Dark Journey:

Wind

Unseen you rush around me
You touch me, yet I can't touch you
Gentle you are when you cool me
When angry, and violent you grow,
I curse you
No mind of your own, you blindly
move in whatever direction you may go
Unleashed you are Free
Yet you remind me of how life can be
Rushing off to do something,
And not knowing what it is.

Breath

Unseen like the air you surround me
You touch me in my inner most parts
Gentle you are in my weakness
Nothing overlooks you
Every movement of yours is done with authority
Your promise is Freedom
The Freedom I cry out for to love
The love that gives meaning

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[68] Colossians 3:12, Jerusalem Bible
[69] Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, On Death and Dying, Columbia University Press, (1995) on CD-ROM

The meaning that gives breath
The breath that gives life

The first poem was written five years before I renewed my walk with Jesus, yet it was still an accurate predictor of my attitudes before my Dark Journey began. One comment I received about these two poems when I shared them with others is that the first one describes a struggle for power, whereas the second one talks about love. This shows that God can use suffering to teach us what is important in life.
Being hungry for power is not the only attitude that I claim God changed in me through my Dark Journey. God also up rooted a lot of the hypocrisy within me. There were many hidden attitudes in my heart that God brought to my consciousness after the worst of my suffering. He did this so that I could individually repent (change my mind) about these attitudes and therefore find Freedom to love with God's help.
In previous versions of this story I included as many details as possible on the path to freedom… but after making more than 350 entries… to read them all is draining. These entries had to do with God giving me spiritual sight and leading me to repentance. In this version of my story many of the lesser details will be deleted. Those Insights that have major significance will remain in this version of my story.
One reason for recording the changes here is to give inspiration to those with similar histories to mine to conquer demonic strongholds. Even if there are similarities of events between the reader's and my life… the reader ought to relax and follow the path that God is leading her or him on and not get discouraged if prayers like mine don't seem to work. The reader may be very close to the mark or victory; and patience, meditation, searching, and listening to God's voice will help one to get the breakthroughs time after time.
A second reason for writing this chapter is to show just how much good can come out of so much brokenness with God's help and direction.
We don't usually fight the war against hypocrisy and pride all at once; it is fought one day at a time. The inner battle is just as important as the outer battle. Getting into the battle is the first step to victory. The second step is getting up each time we fall. If we do this then we are doing the will of God. Freedom is essential to wining the battles.
So the following questions arise. Was I truly as free as God promised me after the Dark Journey ended? If so, what are some of the major events leading up to this Freedom? This freedom did not happen all at once but bit by bit?

The Long Wait:

Before I landed up in the hospital, I still had dreams. After all I was in university and things still looked hopeful there. I thought that I'd been through the worst of it and the promise was FREEDOM!
Then when Dr. Pullmer accurately diagnosed me, I anticipated that the way to Freedom would open up because of medications. But events did not work out that way, they became much more difficult. Because I was plunged into such a deep darkness where my personality, and aptitudes were devoured by the illness, school became a deep disappointment. I couldn't function at the level that was expected from me. A year later, I had to quit graduate school. This added to the sense of powerlessness and hopelessness in my small world that was consumed with suffering.
I then began, unsuccessfully, to look for work, not realizing that I was disabled. I felt small, and abandoned, as my task to make a living for myself looked overwhelming. I

could easily relate to the words from saint Teresa of Avila: "Blessed are thou, Lord, who has made me so incompetent and unprofitable!"[70] I wish I could say that a giant-sized miracle occurred overnight, such as when David overcame his enemy Goliath with a slingshot and one stone, but it didn't. Instead I had to brace myself for the worst, and walk with the light I had, one step at a time through the darkness.

Because of this, things got progressively bleaker. My hope grew vapor-thin at times, and so I started giving up on some of my dreams one after another, to the point that I questioned whether or not I should go on dreaming at all. That's how little hope I had. It took the gentle words from my mother, to encourage me not to give up. After all, without hope there is no dreaming, and without dreaming there is despair and bitterness that nudges one towards suicide.

At this point in time any dream that I tried to dream seemed impossible, including the ones that sprung from God's call on my life, and the promise He made me before my Dark Journey began. Namely, the call for me to feed His sheep, and the promise to be broken into Freedom.

I knew that my call from God had to do with being a fisherman for the souls of people. But at the time it seemed to me that I was much more an example of God's wrath than His love. I felt so unattractive and dysfunctional, hardly a specimen meant to proclaim the Good News of God's Love. As for the promise, it didn't seem to becoming true as I walked through the darkness – except the brokenness. How God would work the details out I had no idea. For the longest time it looked as though unemployment, poverty, and destitution were in the cards for the rest of my life. I tried to console myself with the fact that Jesus didn't have a place to lay his head.[71] Just like in Old Testament times during king Hezekiah's reign when Sennacherib, Israel's enemy, threatened Jerusalem's future. The threat of having a wasted life seemed very real to me.[72]

During this depressing time I could not think of one obvious reason that would show why things could possibly change for the better, and God was silent. I don't know how Abraham felt about God and all His promises when year after year the natural progression of things seemed to indicate that God would not come through. My friend Dan told me that I would play a role in just how strong I would become as God rebuilt me. Looking at my addictions at the time I felt like I had screwed up God's plans. Looking at the natural it seemed crazy to believe. But I believed any way.

My decidedly dark pessimistic paradigm woven by demons of despair stole all the joy from my soul as I journeyed through this period of my life. All I could do, no matter how silly it felt, was hold onto the light I already had, which was my call from God and His promise. I waited as patiently for more light as I could. I put my hope in Psalm 46, which says that God helps His people at break of day.[73]

My waiting for a change in circumstances was stretched out for many years because the medication I was on worked ever so slowly.

<u>The Process Of Real Changes:</u>

The healthier I got the more I began to investigate my motives and desires in the things I

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[70] E. Allison Peers, The Life of Teresa of Jesus, Image Books (1960), p. 147

[71] Cf. Matthew 8:20

[72] Cf. 2 Kings 18:1-19:37

[73] Cf. Psalm 46:6

did or coveted, because I wanted to change for the better. Once I saw (with God's light) how they were at work within me, I confessed them to God, and made up my mind to do better in the future.

It was like peeling an onion. First the more obvious sins of the past were laid bare. Then, later on, God began to put His finger on things I'd forgotten were there. Each time He did this, I was invited to repent (change my mind on the issues). Each time I repented, I became healthier spiritually.

I then began to understand how the Twelve Steps really work. And so, I began to work my version of Twelve Steps that I call the Twelve (Plus Four) Steps. God used them to point out even more things I had to attend to.

Dealing with the past in this way God was able to bring more and more Freedom to me in the present. God replaced so much evil or darkness in me with His marvelous light through this process. I actually became aware of some of God's gifts to me, namely the fruit of the Spirit within me.

Having listed the steps that led to my Freedom I'd like to trace out some of the more profound details of this progression so that one will have before and after snap-shots of me. This will help the reader in deciding whether or not the Dark Journey was worth it.

My First Realization:

As my passion and love began to cool down after I started following Jesus in 1989, and before my Dark Journey began, my theology became more and more of a hindrance towards loving others the way God expected me to.

For instance, the idea that formed a basis for most of my spiritual thinking back then was that we are saved through grace by faith, and that it is not earned through works otherwise we would all boast, and that would mean we would have unhealthy pride. Now there is nothing wrong with this in itself, but it is subject to abuses, and doesn't cover all aspects of salvation.

Being only focused on this idea, I used it as a means to rationalize my weak efforts when it came to performing works of love. Put another way, I was very lazy and so naturally and wrongfully used the idea of not having to do good works to earn my salvation as an excuse for not doing many at all. This delusion of darkness is exactly what Satan wants each of us to believe, and ultimately act out. I was coming dangerously close to ignoring the epistle of James when it says that faith without works is dead.

Legalism, And Hypocrisy:

In my earlier Christian walk when I said something that wasn't completely true or even down right false. I would quickly attempt to find a favorable interpretation of what I had just said. If I found one, then I would not feel guilty, or try to correct my misleading statements. I later would come to realize that this was wrong. If anything, love finds joy in the truth, and not in something that appears to be true, but was intended in another way.

As I regressed in my Christian walk, I would get my theology more and more confused with the actual state or condition that my soul was in at the time; this meant unhealthy growths of hypocrisy and legalism in my behaviors and attitudes at the time. At the time I thought that what I believed theologically in many cases had become a part of my character – a definite fallacy.

Also I came to think that broadening one's understanding and knowledge on spiritual issues was the goal of Christianity. I did this after I started to abandon my commitment to

loving others. And because I thought I understood certain spiritual truths, I unnaturally believed that meant I had the virtue of humility. I falsely believed that I was a mature Christian because I thought I understood so much. Humility understands the more one knows, the less one feels that one actually knows much at all.

Have you ever noticed how some people who can't stand Christians happen to think that Jesus was just like they are; while many honest Christians truly believe that there is a world of difference between their behavior and that of Jesus? When I witnessed to others shortly after I rediscovered Jesus in 1989, I felt that others should imitate me. I felt this way because I had such a distorted view of my supposed piety. After my Dark Journey began, and when I started to think about sharing Jesus again, I knew that I needed to point to Jesus as the example for people to follow, because I began to see just how far short I fell from the standard He set (even after God began to grant me Freedom).

Insensitivity (The Tip Of The Iceberg):

Before my Dark Journey began I used to, when meditating on the passion of Jesus, try to minimize all other human suffering in order to maximize Jesus' suffering. There was one other exception – my own sufferings. Looking back at this I now see just how wrong this was. Jesus became one with us in our humanity, and that means He took on our sufferings as well.

Because He suffered unto death, He is able to sympathize with each of our sufferings perfectly. This is not what I was doing. What I was doing was breaking my solidarity with the human family. I was distancing myself from their miseries and becoming less Christ-like in the process.

Now when I meditate on the passion of our Lord, I do so with hope of feeling more deeply my neighbors' sufferings. Jesus' sufferings give value and meaning to our sufferings if we let them.

There was even more insensitivity in the past. I had a very thick skin before my Dark Journey. I used to think that there was a lot of insignificant suffering in other people's lives because of my hardness of heart. But part of me wanted to do God's will. So I would try to imagine what God's emotional reaction would be in these instances. But because I personally felt so little for these people in their suffering, I naturally thought that God felt the same way because I did not see Him doing anything to help them. This would further dry up the compassion in my heart for these people, the exact opposite of what God calls us to do, which is to mourn with those who mourn, and to rejoice with those who rejoice.[74]

After my condition of schizophrenia began to improve, I recognized this flaw in my actions and through the grace of God changed my belief, and began to search for ways to be more sensitive towards others.

It's amazing how certain beliefs and thinking can cut off one's compassion for, and solidarity with one's neighbors. In this case one can see the connection between my faith and my love. My imperfect faith in the past limited my ability to love. Having a greater revelation of who Jesus or God is enables us to love ever more deeply from our hearts. This insensitivity on my part was only the tip of an iceberg. God would later on have me deal with this remaining insensitivity through repentance (a change of mind) that leads to a change of heart that leads to a change in my actions, and so advance to a greater portion

[74] Cf. Romans 12:15

of the promised Freedom.

From Rigidity To Relationship:

After I began to follow the Lord again in 1989, and began to read the Bible, my one complaint was that it was awfully silent on so many issues, and this bothered me. I used to say to myself, "If only God would tell me what to do, then I would do it!" Talk about pride. I wanted a list of things to do, a book that would explain in exhaustive details my most pressing question: "What should I do if "this or that" happened in the complexities of my life?"

Ironically, if I were given such a book, pride, fear, and doubt would almost certainly prevent me from doing as it said. Little did I know at that time, that God had given me something better – Him self. He wouldn't always tell me what to do in every situation, since after all; I'm neither a robot nor a computer. What He had called me to is a living relationship with Himself!

That doesn't mean I no longer wish to know what the right thing to do is in many situations. I do. Instead of choosing the path of least resistance as I normally did in the past, I grew dependent on God in prayer through my Dark Journey. I began to ask Him to fill my heart with good desires, so that my aim in acting out my call would not go astray.

About Practicing Pride And Humility:

Many of us like to think about ourselves as loving, kind and generous if we are honest. But many times these ideas can be unfounded. When they are unfounded then we have pride and hypocrisy. I had unhealthy growths of these vices in my life before I entered my Dark Journey and for a time afterwards.

Here are some of those flaws. After I began to pray again before my Dark Journey began. I was motivated out of concern for others in my prayer life, but after starting out in the spirit for nearly two years, my prayer life became more and more earthly. When this occurred, and I participated in community prayer, I found myself thinking more about how to impress others than reaching for the heart of God.

In private prayer I also began to take my eyes off Jesus. I began to look at what I saw my riches to be and gloated over them. The ironic thing is I really did not have much to say "I'm rich" about! I became enamored with my own understanding, creativeness, theological slants, and insights in prayer and out of prayer.

I would also borrow ideas and insights from others and pass them off as if I had come up with them myself. In short, I became proud.

Sincere prayer returned to me the day my Dark Journey began. I persevered at prayer even when it began to hurt, to the point where I was deceived into thinking not pray the Lord's Prayer any longer. Even though I didn't pray the Lord's Prayer, I still prayed other prayers. These I persisted at for some time until my prayer life became dull, dry, and boring. There was no sweetness in it at all. This period lasted for many years.

Most of the time all I could pray was, "Lord, please save me from my sins," or, "Please humble me, Lord." This later changed into, "Lord, please help me to practice humility" when I began to see evidence of my pride. After saying these prayers for many years, I was surprised to hear an eloquent prayer from my lips. The Lord was humbling me! I was getting down to the bare necessities in my spiritual walk. It was a real treat when the dryness left in my prayer life. I had learned my lesson!

Even More Pride:

I now know what pride is; I can see it in myself. Reading Mere Christianity by C.S.

Lewis and some of Saint John of the Cross' writings also helped me to see it more clearly.[75] I remember getting to the point before my Dark Journey began where my hunger and thirst for knowledge died. It died because I thought that I understood everything worth understanding. What put the nail in the coffin was getting a key insight into Scripture. Surprisingly the insight had to do with how humility and grace were related to each other.

At the time I though that I was humble because I had become a Christian, and because I saw myself as humble, and that humility was something to be prized, I naturally lost most of the humility I had been given up until that point in my life. My knowledge on what pride and humility meant back then was virtually non-existent. There was a very big discrepancy between ideal theory and my practice. In short, I was blind to my pride and did not know it.

Before I started following Jesus, I was a drifter with no clear direction in life. Afterwards, I slowly began to see the possibility of Christian Ministry as a vocation. I wanted to utter eloquent and convicting truths to scores of people. I wanted to be a leader. I wanted people to hang on my words. I wanted people to think that I was wise and had understanding. I wanted glory.

It took my Dark Journey for me to discern that I am not cut out to be a pastor of a church. Instead, I now want to be a servant of a different kind. There can be good motives involved in becoming a preacher. I just didn't have these good motives. My motives were ugly. Another problem was that I just wasn't called to be a preacher or pastor. I was called to be a fisherman for souls of people. There is a difference.

The last thing I needed was a position over others. Scripture warns against recent converts taking on positions of authority in case they become proud.[76]

Humility is a virtue all preach, none practice, and yet everybody is content to hear. The master thinks it good doctrine for his servant, the laity for the clergy, and the clergy for the laity.[77]

I am no longer a recent convert and I still find practicing humility a difficulty.

During my University days I was very competitive. So much so that I hardened my heart towards others and consequently could not feel compassion for those who needed it. I was a very proud person back then. I always had to have a more than respectable mark if not the highest on assignments or exams.

This all changed during my Dark Journey, and became apparent when I took my first of two English courses at UBC in the summer of 1999. Again I was faced with the dilemma: "Should I compete, dispute, battle, fight, strive, and struggle for supremacy with my classmates, or should I have some friendly solidarity with them?"

Before my Dark Journey began I knew that there was a problem with me not being able to feel love and compassion for other students. I managed to say "No" to it in 1999 and it did not significantly impact the way I behaved towards my classmates. One of the last

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[75] Cf. C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity, Published by Simon & Schuster New York, ©1980, pp. 109-114

[76] Cf. 1 Timothy 3:6

[77] John Selden, Table Talk, "Humility", Columbia University Press, (1995) on CD-ROM.

fruits from my Dark Journey would be to get down to the root of this evil and repent (change my mind) and therefore find Freedom. But I would have to wait a few more years before God would deal a deathblow to the attitudes in my heart that gave rise to this form of pride.

What Is Needed To Persevere Without Joy?

As you have already read, I had lost the joy of God's salvation quite early in my Dark Journey. I do not think that it had to do with any of the sins I had committed while going through my Dark Journey, but I think that it was because of the overwhelming burden of my cross. My cup was bitter. So if, "the joy of the LORD is your strength" as Nehemiah 8:10 says, what becomes your strength when the joy is gone? One's hunger and thirst for righteousness becomes one's strength.

This became my hope – to eat at the King's table (no wonder communion became so important. The special graces it affords in regard to living righteously are out of this world). This hope then became my strength. Jesus said, "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied,"[78] if not in the short term, then the long run.

Not all acts of love are joyous in the doing. Most of the acts of love are boring in the doing, but they make people happy in the end. Infants do small acts of love, whereas adults do larger acts of love. Infants can't go without gratification for long, but adults usually can. The weaning process can be a nightmare; it's like giving birth – first the pain, and then the disorientation, followed by wondering in a dry and weary land. No pain, no gain.

None of the above repenting put an end to my lack of joy. None of the above repenting changed significantly the insensitivity, and pride within my heart. I had to persevere until May 2001 before God to my surprise would change this.

A Major Insight From God & Therefore A Major Step Forward To Freedom:

"[Weeping] may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning."[79] The road that led to Joy involved me re-examining my relationship with a dear person.

Despite my commitment to loving others as myself when I renewed my walk with the Lord in 1989, I overlooked the brokenness in many of my relationships. Instead of examining my poor attitudes and resentments towards those I claimed to love, and repenting by sharing in forgiveness with them. I ignored my insensitivity and buried the resentments I had in my heart. This meant that I would continue in shallow and lukewarm relationships until I became conscious of my sins and repented. (For a long time I saw repentance as changing my actions, but the Biblical definition is: "to change one's mind." When the mind is renewed, God is not long in changing the heart and the actions too).

My Dark Journey slowly changed how I related to others for the better. But despite coming this far there were still some significant things blocking me from loving deeply those I knew. One of the keys to unlocking them was in giving up hidden resentments that I had held against so many people.

My relationships suffered primarily because of what I did, and not because of what others had done or were doing. This callousness could not be undone in one step. I would have to deal with each broken relationship individually.

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[78] Matthew 5:6, New American Bible

[79] Psalm 30:5b

The first relationship that God wanted to restore was a surprise to me, because I thought that the relationship had dramatically improved over time despite the past. And it didn't matter how good we were to each other, there was always something missing. I won't say who this person was in order to protect their identity because they really are a good person. When speaking about this person below, I will use female pronouns although that may or may not be the case.

The fact that I still held onto resentments towards others without being conscious about them for so long should not be surprising. We all have blind spots. God decided to start changing things by answering a related prayer request I made at a retreat on a course called Alpha in my church. I had asked God for self-control, and three days later got it after I read something by Dr. Larry Crabb that opened my eyes.[80]

As my relationship with a certain person developed, I gradually began to dislike the way that she confronted me with the truth. I thought it lacked sensitivity. On top of this there was a fight that happened between us where I let the sun go down on my very intense and heated anger. I found her relating style ugly and resented it, and over time the resentments got buried in the darkness within my heart, especially the major one coming from the fight thus leaving an awkward silence or lack of communication between us when we tried to talk.

Just as impurities rise to the surface when gold is refined in the fire, these hidden resentments towards her remained until it was brought to the surface through this trial. On the first day of May 2001, I repented in faith, forgave the person, and was healed by God.

After I did this I found some of my hardness of heart replaced with an overwhelming joy. Also a new measure of peace, and Freedom was granted to me. This did not completely restore my relationship with this person; I would need to change my attitudes towards her in more ways before the relationship could really grow again. But a significant obstacle was removed because of the mercy and grace belonging to God.

Immediately after this inner healing took place two things happened. First, I started to praise Almighty God, and in the past when I did this out loud and enthusiastically, I was bogged down with curse words entering into my mind, and I always wondered why. For the first time they were gone. Secondly, a few minutes later, I felt like a bus had hit me. This resentment was like a root or sucker that had drained my meager resources for the longest time.

Pornography was not a problem after I renewed my walk with Jesus in 1989 but I had been addicted to lust in my imagination after the fight with this person. A second fruit that became immediately apparent after this healing is that I was granted the gift of chastity. Somehow before this, I had sought to comfort myself with sexual fantasies because of the hurt, discomfort, discord, and emptiness created by this hidden resentment against a certain person.

Chastity is a priceless gift. As time elapsed, and I grew less demonized I became aware that my perceptions of females had radically changed. Most of my ideas on how I viewed and wanted to approach sex changed. I no longer had a dirty mind. I no longer looked at the female body the same way. I started to feel clean. Before I used to see sex as only physical – I only paid lip service to the spiritual aspects. I also didn't pay attention to the

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[80] Cf. Larry Crabb, Inside Out, NAVPRESS (1992), pp. 116-119

reality that each living female body is endowed with a soul, a personality and has feelings. The female human body is beautiful… but so is the inside.
I now see women more than ever as persons. I used to see them as purely sex objects when I was interested in sex. Sure I'm still sexually attracted to women. But it is not the same as before. Before I used to focus on a woman's body and not on her whole person when it came to sex. I was a very shallow person.
I would then practice chastity with nearly no temptation for about three straight years only to act like a dog and go back to eat my vomit there after. God would then show me that other things weren't so well with my heart/mind.
I also had a definition of forgiveness I came up with that wasn't completely valid and which was responsible for me becoming very judgmental towards others. I also had a lot more repenting to do in other areas of my life that I was unaware of. The Essay on the Twelve (Plus Four) Steps from this Website explains and develops the concepts of abiding in detail.
"Anger is an emotion; it is not good or bad, its what we do with it that determines whether it becomes acceptable or unacceptable."[81] Anger if not dealt with properly leads to three roots: one being "resentments" that leads to the fruit of addictions and insensitivity; and two more roots that were still hidden within me and would be revealed to me by God much later on in my journey. These roots were also responsible for me bearing the fruit of insensitivity in me towards others no matter how much I wanted to love them. There is another root to insensitivity not derived from anger. It is having the attitude of being wise in one's own eyes.

WHAT FORGIVENESS IS NOT:

Thanks to Brad Jersak and the Holy Spirit pointing it out in my own life I would much later learn that forgiveness does not minimize or deny the wrongness of another person's wrongful acts of aggression. Forgiveness does not mean you are OK, I'm OK, we are OK, and it is OK. I would learn later on in January 2012 that to minimize or deny a wrong does not make forgiveness. When one does this we are wrongfully moving personal boundaries. This leads to plenty of unwanted judging, anger, pouting, weakness, and hurting of self and others because real and imagined boundaries are continually crossed. I did this for nearly nine years. It was painful, ugly, and unwanted… and ruined much of my happiness because I had wrongly moved personal boundaries belonging to others and therefore my own too.

WHAT DO I MEAN BY FORGIVENESS?

The word "forgive" has three main meanings. They are:

(1) To stop being angry or resenting somebody or somebody's behavior. (i.e.) To no longer hold a grievance or act against another person or to no longer nurse anger against another person.
(2) To excuse somebody for a mistake, misunderstanding, wrongdoing, or an inappropriateness.
(3) To cancel a debt or obligation.

Under all three of these situations, there might still be temporal obligations the

[81] Peter Herbeck on "Crossing the Goal" streamed on my computer from the Web.

perpetrator of the wrong deed might be expected to give to bring about full satisfaction. Forgiveness does not always mean that the perpetrator does not need to make amends. The victim, the perpetrator, the state, the Church, or God can regulate or choose temporal obligations or disciplines under certain circumstances towards perpetrators of the immoral acts. Just because we have forgiven a person in the sense of (1) and (2) doesn't mean that we should automatically welcome them into our homes again as if nothing happened especially if there is a chance they will hurt someone gravely again. When trust between an agent and victim is not restored by the wrong doer, or the wrong doer is unrepentant, then we can't be buddy, buddy with the wrong doer as before. But if we love God we will want to love and learn to love the agents of our hurts. This takes supernatural grace and love. We love those who are all persons by finding out what their individual love languages are, and loving them in that way. There are five love languages: quality time, words, works of service, gifts, and touch. Watch out for predators.

If we have been sexually abused in the past in some way, then we must forgive the agent of that hurt if we are to be free of it (in the sense of (1) and (2)) and so no longer view ourselves as victims. But if criminal charges can be sustained against the agent of our hurts, then even after we have given up our anger (and have forgiven him or her and therefore dealt with our anger) we should try to bring this agent to justice so they can be disciplined or punished. If we won't pursue justice for our safety, then we need to do so for the safety of others.

Most people who we believe to have sinned against us aren't even aware of what they have done. We ought to forgive them anyways. The only time we ought to tell them they are forgiven is when they ask for forgiveness. If they don't ask for forgiveness we don't mention it unless they are a danger to society.[82]

Repentance is related to forgiveness and reconciliation.

As for repentance here are 3 possible meanings:

- To recognize the wrong in something you have done and to be sorry about it
- To feel regret about a sin or past actions and change your ways or habits.
- A feeling of regret or contrition for having done something wrong.

If the agents of our hurts do not want to repent, then there is no foundation for trusting relationships with them. But we have to give up our anger against them and replace it with God given compassion. To me forgiveness is about dealing with one's anger in constructive and compassionate ways. Un-resolved anger makes us feel bad, and if not dealt with will cause addictions, depression, psychosis, or other disorders. Forgiveness means to no longer seeing ourselves as victims.

Some people believe that God only forgives those who repent and further believe that is the way it should be with how we forgive. God has never sinned so He doesn't have to forgive like we need to who have sinned. God is love not anger. People who believe that repentance is necessary for forgiveness define forgiveness differently than I do. Clearly if one is not willing to change one's behavior the relationship will not be what it was or

[82] I am grateful to my wife for this insight, and to R.T. Kendall for making this wisdom real to me.

could be. Forgiveness leads to reconciliation when repentance is present. It is God's desire to forgive all. Not all people will or do receive and embrace that forgiveness. When a young boy breaks someone else's window he might be expected to get a job so that he can pay off the damages even after he is forgiven in the senses of (1) and (2). The aim at making amends has to do with taking responsibility for one's actions, correcting them, and changing one's ways so that no one will hopefully be hurt in future in the same way. Such is the fruit of real repentance. Much more can be said I am sure. To sum up, the way I define forgiveness has to do with no longer viewing one's self as a victim, or continuing to nurse anger towards the perpetrators of crimes (real or imagined) against us. To forgive in the sense of (1) and (2) helps us to move on in life and to be free of the past and the anger.

"Anger is designed to be a guest, not a life time resident."[83] Guests ought to stay only for a short while whereas lifetime residents are continual burdens. Ideally we ought to deal with our anger in healthy ways and once dealt with ought to be gone. We deal with this through forgiveness in the sense of (1) and (2). However, anger can come back and knock on the doors of our hearts/minds, and can even invite itself back into our hearts yet again without us consciously being aware of it or realizing what we are doing. Hence the constant need for a Great Shepherd to guide us and look out for all our best interests. Some acts are either moral or immoral, whereas other acts may annoy us but are neither right nor wrong and so are neutral. Both kinds of acts may foster intense anger and can turn into resentments. That anger needs to be dealt with in healthy ways.

As for the third meaning of "forgive" given above: "(3) To cancel a debt or obligation." Often we will need to do so when it comes to objects or money stolen or lent and not returned back to us. If we had something precious taken from us we must not make our healing dependent on the agent returning it. Healing comes when we leave what to do about the precious thing that was stolen in God's hands[84]. That will help bring us that much closer to healing and freedom and closer.

We might also have the debt or obligation of undergoing discipline for certain wrongdoings. Discipline shows us the gravity of our crimes, and is used to change our hearts and minds for the better when not spurned.

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

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[83] Gary Chapman, "Anger: Handling A Powerful Emotion In A Healthy Way", Northfield Publishing © 2004, p. 85

[84] Indebt to Brad Jersak for this insight and it brought healing to me in a situation that has taken time to forgive (let off the hook).

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.[85]

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 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-

[85] Cf. Larry Crabb, Connecting, Word Publishing (1997), pp. 103-115

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 attitudes 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 Anhedonia[86] 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.
- Exercise is made much too difficult because of my suffering; I'm still sixty to eighty pounds overweight. 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

[86] This is loss of the ability to experience pleasurable emotions.

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".[87] 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. They don't worry about others stealing from them cause they have never owned anything them selves. 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

[87] David Adam, Forward to Freedom, Upper Room Books 2001, p. 23

tidings.[88]

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 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

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

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."[89] It 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

[89] James 2:24 NRSV

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 in 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 standup 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 Himself. 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 the final Judge... with Him giving commands or laws or judgments on all sorts of moral matters but He dispenses grace and mercy to help us to learn how to keep His commands to love, whereas people condemn themselves by giving up and rejecting God, His grace, and His mercy. “Grace”-based relationships make us stable and more secure than those based on performance, because our relationships with Him are based on His kindness, warmth, strength, richness, and the hope He offers. 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!

A New Approach To Starting Each Day:

For a very long time I would start my days off with focusing on the latest revelation I had received from God whether it was a day old or weeks old. On Wednesday, February 25, 2009 I realized that the best way for me to start each day is ask God: "Where am I now?" and to wait for Him to answer me. Instead of me rushing wildly and foolishly into battles real or imagined, wasting precious resources, and blindly swinging my spiritual sword at whatever attacks me. God has made me with intelligence, understanding, perceptions, and discernment and I need to use them to best of my ability (along with my faith) even when impaired somehow. God doesn't lead us backwards; He leads us only forwards. Having a mental illness that is delusion-based… means that I can be all over the map emotionally/intellectually/attitude/and perception-wise moment to moment and day to day and so the truths/principles/maxims/ and ideas that worked yesterday to stabilize my thought (and therefore action life) and helped me to stay sane need not work as effectively the next day. That doesn't mean that I can scoff at what worked yesterday and not so much today. I need to remain thankful for each piece of bread that nourishes me along the way whether I received it yesterday or just now.

Each human is a complex being. And each human has a mortal enemy: a devil or demon that wars against her or his soul. Circumstances come and go. Opportunities come and go. But God made each of us for Himself. And He wants each of us to be made strong through the battles and temptations that come our ways. Our own mighty strength to say no to sin can be best compared to trying to hold back a fart that is destined to make it self-known. It won't accomplish much more than to stink up the air a bit. True strength comes from growing dependent on God for grace, wisdom, insight, love, faith, hope and consolation.

I am learning that my path is not a solitary path. It is interwoven with many others each and every day. I can't be focused only on myself (and so be selfish). There are many meetings that God intends for each of us, either to receive, give, or both to give and receive. Each devil wishes to frustrate this process. But God is gracious, loving, caring, kind, all-wise and all-powerful. He works all things together for our good. All this I need to remember as I carry my cross and follow Jesus my Leader and Savior. I need to remember it in the back of my mind as I start each day and through it until my head hits my pillow at each day's end.

We must not remain ignorant of the devils schemes. We have to keep him inside the picture. And we need to keep our focus on abiding in Jesus, following Him to where He leads us, and accomplishing what God has designed and planned for us to do.

True Love Sees The Pros and Cons:

Seeing the cost of each act of love should not make us shrink back. We don't have to dread counting the cost. We don't have to suppress the cost to conquer the cost of loving others. What makes love so special is that it overcomes obstacles. Including those barriers in our minds and hearts. Love sees the pros and cons in each situation that it encounters. Love doesn't set its heart on each thing going its way. Whether it is the flesh or just human nature that opposes doing unselfish acts, the only way to overcome them for a Christian is to abide in Jesus the True Vine through faith.

God Leads Me To Give Up Another Forgotten Judgment:

Many years ago I was in a book buying-reading phase and I wanted to explore all the theological ideas that were related to loving others more deeply. I bought a book on community and read therein that there was no hierarchy within the Trinity. Ironically this stance angered me so much that I never finished reading the book because of it. Today, Tuesday March 31, 2009 God showed me that I needed to give up the resentment I made towards the author of that book so very long ago. When I forgave the hardness left.

Moving Back To Basics:

It is amazing how something so simple can become so complex and even a cloak covering one's pride and judgmental attitudes. Yes the Gospel is about "Forgiveness" and "Love." In forgiving our sins, God has mercy on us, in particular on me. Mercy means that I don't somehow earn or merit this gift through my own goodness. No one deserves this gift. No one can earn it by one's own goodness. Judging whether or not others will be forgiven if certain conditions are met can lead one to think that others may or may not deserve the forgiveness of God. Fact is none of us deserve to be forgiven our sins. Forgiveness is a gift. Judgment belongs to God. If God can forgive me then He can forgive anyone it pleases Him to forgive. "Jesus said that the prostitutes and sinners were entering Heaven instead of the Pharisees, Scribes and Priests. Jesus also said that He would leave the 99 sheep that are not lost to find the one that is lost."[90] God is love. God can forgive this side of death, at death, or after death. His Judgment Seat is exactly this: He can dispense mercy or condemnation when He judges anyone: including you and me. We all deserve condemnation. Having been forgiven I need to and want to wish the forgiveness for sins for everyone else even sworn enemies of the Jesus' cross. God does not delight in the punishment of the wicked. God is love not hatred.

We are not *worthy* of redemption, but we do have great *worth* in the eyes of God. We are made in the image of God: each one of us is worth more than any physical wealth that can be accumulated. We are all magnificent creatures. God loves us more than we can imagine. God does not make junk. God made us for Himself. What a great hope He has given us!

Working The Twelve (Plus Four) Steps:

Because I had an unhealthy obsession in my mind that was too BIG for me to manage all by myself I decided to work the Steps again. I found peace of mind, and found more stuff from my past dealt with because God honored the Steps I took with His help. Yet I know

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[90] Thank you Mom for pointing this out to me!

that Step 3 always needs to be worked or practiced by me. That is asking Jesus to let me abide in Him so that I can love others and die to sin.
I know that if I am unable to love myself then I won't be able to love anyone else! This is a sign that past stuff needs to be worked on through the Twelve (Plus Four) Steps by me.

Repenting From Demanding-ness & Challenged To See God Differently:

It is amazing how often God will use things said by other people at different times to reveal to me what is in my heart. And when He does this I know God is challenging my worldview or attitudes and that I will inevitably have some repenting to do. This happened on Thursday, April 16, 2009 when I overheard a person talk about how she treats other people whose faiths differ from hers…. As a result I asked myself how do I react to those people in those same situations and I immediately felt an angry hardness directed towards them when I looked within myself and I realized that it was fuelled by a demand that these people "had" to always say "YES" to God's truth, commands, invitations, or revelations and that any deviation from the light could not be tolerated. I demanded this from others, even though I gave myself freedom to make mistakes, be lazy, and choose sin over virtue at different times and in different situations in my life. I came to see this as me being a hypocrite. I now have victory over this hypocrisy in my life as I have repented and adjusted to a better attitude: a more gentle, kind, patient, soft, and peaceful attitude. Truth liberates.
Much later, on Saturday May 15, 2010, God made me aware that I still had a demanding attitude when it came to how I interpreted certain Scriptures. I realized that I was demanding from others that they accept the truth the way I have come to see it. I was not respecting the freedom to choose that God gives all persons. The truth is what it is; only God changes the hearts and minds… I can't go around demanding that others conform to the way I see things… even on dearly held beliefs.
God does not harden His heart towards anyone because He does not change in His attributes. He loves all of us, and always will. God does not want to get even with those who transgress His laws or ways. He is a forgiving, compassionate, wise, and patient God. He does not nurse revengeful feelings towards those who are His enemies. If He does deliver pain or punishment towards us then it is meant as discipline, opportunities for spiritual growth, and purification. These opportunities will be embraced by those who love God and rejected by those who hate Him. Without embracing purifying situations we won't grow, we will regress, become stunted, and that is what Hell is all about.

Spiritual Warfare:

Fighting off lies from the enemy can be a difficult job especially when one has schizophrenia and has to fight off delusions as well. Faith correctly placed is key to finding victory. Holy Scripture says to those who believe it that:

No weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper,
and you shall confute every tongue that rises against you in judgment.
This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD
and their vindication from me, says the LORD.[91]

[91] Isaiah 54:17 NRSV

Some of the weapons fashioned against me tested my faith, patience, and sanity for a very long time before the Lord brought clarity, truth, victory and peace. Believing that God won't lead one astray, and that wherever one finds oneself God has made a way into the light is also important. God has more power to lead us correctly than the enemy has to lead us astray. I feel much stronger now, more joyful, and at peace after coming to these realizations. I feel that I have with God's help mastered my fears. Amen!

Understanding Love Better:

After I reconverted to Christ in 1989 I would put a lot of focus on what I thought was supernatural love. At the time I saw it as totally separated from the natural loves. I saw the natural loves as earthly (self-righteous), vile, and empty worth nothing and an outgrowth of pride. This distortion made me judgmental towards others and unable to embrace the truth, goodness, and light that they embraced and lived out. Years later God showed me that natural love was not vile but rather it was good as far as it went; only that it falls short of what it is called to. Natural love is a preparation for supernatural love. Moving from natural love to supernatural love is difficult. It requires supernatural grace. For a Christian it requires that we abide in Jesus the True Vine for apart from Him we can do nothing of Eternal worth.

We're All On A Journey And No One Has Arrived:

Yesterday, Sunday April 27, 2009, as I was on my way to visit my girlfriend, I was waiting for a connecting bus and I thought to my self that if I could get to my destination instantly, or really fast via an underground subway system then I would miss so much of Vancouver in between my starting points and my destinations. I did not spiritualize this thought and immediately focused on my journey. Later that day we were at Trout Lake Park with friends and to my surprise the conversation without my help brought up the same topic with the same thoughts I had earlier in the day pondered. To me this was a God moment. It told me that I was where God wanted me. After all what is the probability that others would be thinking what I thought earlier in the day?

The next day I realized that God wanted to tell me more than that I was in the right place the previous day. He wanted to tell me to embrace the journey its joys, sorrows and burdens. As there is so much He wants to teach me through the journey: the journey will change me for the better if I don't give up abiding in Jesus: it will also change for the better the way I see others and God.

Finding My Footing Yet Again:

My life was once again in crisis mode… and so I emailed my friend Dan requesting his opinion on my approach. He said:

"For some reason it brings to mind a saying from those old kung-fu movies. You have likely seen a scene like this: the master is mentoring his charge to a higher level of mastery, and says something like: "Now that you have mastered your technique, you must forget technique - stop thinking about it." And while some elements of the spiritual life require mindfulness / awareness, other elements need to be dropped / let go of in order to be fully aware / present to lived reality.

I liked what he said, but I did not see the full impact of his insight, and how close he hit the mark of where I was at on Wednesday, May 6, 2009. Thankfully I realized that he was spot on the mark. I began to see that I am too principle orientated and not enough

relationship orientated... looking at myself I realize that I am not celebrating God: God's love, grace, and compassion... (hence a lack of joy). I am instead principle or New Testament "law" focused... treating the Christian life as a bunch of rules that need to be kept and ignoring God. I am not a machine, I need to feel, express, receive, laugh, cry, and give.... Obeying rules leads to pride or failure... and I can see that in me 12 hours ago. I had also emailed my friend Alex Pruss who wrote me:

"I think it might be good simply to leave the worrying about the state of one's soul to God. He wants your salvation more than you want it yourself! Of course, it is good to try to find out what faults one has, so that one would be able to try to fix them. But the focus should be on the practical--on finding what to fix and how.
"We can rejoice that God is saving us. How much progress he's made, that's up to him! It may in some ways be more than we think, for God often works secretly.

Alex was spot on too. I am now experiencing God's peace, consolation, hope, and love again. I guess I was attempting to do it all by myself.

Further Along:

I am also learning that the slower the process of salvation, movement from darkness to light, slavery to freedom, and bondage to peace the more likely the end result will last. Reason being is that we learn things that are important in the process or redemption when those processes take time. When things come too quickly then: "Easy come means easy go." I know also that when things are uncomfortable for me that in all likelihood God wants for the time being for me to learn stuff that I'd otherwise not learn in comfortable situations. That requires patience and looking to Him for my daily bread.
They say that if a butterfly is cut out of a cocoon without having to struggle and free itself by itself it will never fly. This image is my bread at this time. I want to fly. Jesus' way is better… but harder to come to… but once discovered… is very appreciated… and worth the process of discovery.

More Insights, Centering & Freedom:

Starting around grade 10 or 11 and onwards I would wrongly begin to judge, and hate my self in order to motivate myself. I would then begin to slowly reject a lot of my true insights, valid feelings, intuitions, and discernments I was capable of through policing and rejecting my own thoughts. I would also become weaken in my ability to form warm and lasting relationships. When I renewed my Christian walk I wrongly saw that good people (i.e. Saints) did not get angry, upset, frustrated, hurt, or make mistakes and that they instantly accepted all that happened to them without process (this is a lie). This is what I set out to become.
There are many lies one can believe: Is it to keep oneself from rejection? Is it to be a "good" girl or boy; or man or woman? Is it not to get hurt again? Is it to fit in somehow in every stage of life or community that we come across? Is it to become a "saint" when we pursue a spiritual path, or a "paragon of some misguided perfection" that will protect oneself from further hurt? Whatever the case may be the attitude of being hard on oneself started (in reaction to pain, hurt, or hardships) for at least one reason to begin with. And may have snow balled there after growing BIGGER as time went by.
After walking through much darkness for many years I knew plenty of good and bad principles... and for many years I policed myself, was hard on myself, put pressure on

myself, forced myself to be as perfect and machine like as possible. In short I was a people pleaser acting from the surface, not from the center of myself, not from my heart or strength because I was in denial suppressing much of my true self. I was superficial and practiced insensitivity towards myself and therefore towards others. Deep down I was angry and did not know it. I now know that admitting and celebrating the truth in each situation (past or present) is the key to slowly developing a healthy life no matter how disagreeable, ugly or threatening those truths may seem like at the time. Building my life slowly, patiently, and following the light: Jesus... is the path for me because He knows where to lead and guide me to especially on paths I had no idea were there.
I began to realize that uprooting the resentments I made in the past is only half the battle. Looking at the consequences of those resentments like how I started to skewly judge, police others and myself, and repress the truth within myself. Looking at how those resentments have obscured my vision, my worldview, and my opinions. And then to repent with God's help through faith from believing the lies that set me on the path to put pressure, police, hate, and repress parts of myself. In this way more insensitivity will be dealt with. I would later learn that the roots to this started very early on in my life.
I know that there are many principles that I can practice... and my focus ought not to be those principles... but the reality of what God is bringing into my life. God will spur me onto use those principles that are relevant and useful when they need to be applied, as there is a time for everything under the sun.
God is in control... He desires my salvation more than I do... investing in tomorrow by trusting in God today is where true wisdom lies for me.
I am also learning that the insights mentioned here won't make me perfect. The insights here are meant for me to accept my flaws, limitations, intuitions, feelings, frustrations, and yes my humanity. Even real Saints need time to process, accept, and deal rightly with all the difficulties that come their way. How much more do we the imperfect need time, patience, and wisdom to work through all that is stirred up in us because of the challenges and circumstances that come our way? Accepting where we are at is very important. With it slow, real and lasting change will come with God's leading. But I must warn everyone: We won't arrive at perfection in this life.

Losing Some Killer Teeth:

On Tuesday, June 23, 2009 I woke up in the morning with a dream fresh in my mind. I had dreamt that I was losing my teeth. They were bloody teeth meant to bite into flesh so I could chew and digest. At first I was concerned that they might be my real teeth but that worry quickly vanished. Later that day while at work my supervisor asked if I could put my work aside for a while so that he could talk with me in his office: I agreed. As it turned out a co-worker had witnessed that same afternoon an incident between someone we serve and myself that made the co-worker feel unsettled, and had prompted them to notify my supervisor. At first I was flabbergasted and could not see what I had done wrong. I agreed to abide by my supervisor's requests and terms. But as time went by I felt more and more vexed because I felt that power to do my work had been unfairly taken away from me. When I realized I was lusting after power I knew that there was something wrong with what I had previously done. I realized that I had "demanded" or "commanded" and not "politely requested" something from the customer I had interacted with. When I realized this the dispute evaporated. I felt more love and peace within me realizing that my confrontational attitude was removed. The removal by God of the

abrasive: "demanding spirit" or, "commanding attitude" out from me was prophesied by the Holy Spirit in giving me the dream about losing the bloody teeth.
I am certain that God is at work within me. I am seeing things more real than before, and have more of a choice in whether I give into selfish motives. Thank you Lord God for your compassion!

Removing Another Root: Dealing With Being Hard On Myself Yet Again:

On Sunday July 26, 2009 I realized that I had a very unkind, hard, mean, robotic, and merciless attitude towards me coming up with ideas of things to do with Sophie, and also when I am alone by myself. With God's help I was able to see this… and change my attitude, discard my old way of doing things… and become able to problem solve/plan/ dream/savor/and enjoy things the way God wants for me and those I love. Thank you very much for this new found freedom Lord God. What a relief!

Good News:

Sophie and I got engaged on Saturday August 1, 2009. Our Wedding date is Saturday Nov 14, 2009.

A Dream That Brought Life:

On the morning of Thursday August 13, 2009 shortly before I woke up I dreamt the following dream:

I dreamt that I saw a huge towering rock with people on it and with a great wave smashing against the rock with me thinking what will happen to the people. As the wave washed over the rock the people jumped away from the rock, only for me to see one person jump onto a wood/rope bridge. The wood was old and there were many weak spots. As the person hopped on the bridge some of the wood broke and fell away almost allowing the person to fall below. This was one dangerous bridge! It was clear that little if any progress could be made on this Bridge. Then to my surprise a person dressed up like Indiana Jones jumped in a commanding way onto the bridge along with a whip in his hand. He stood on the Bridge with the person who seemed to have come to a journey's end. There, that is the dream.

I decided to carefully weigh the dream and not draw any rash conclusions. At times the dream brought much fear into my mind… but I kept ruling the fear out based on previous revelations I had received from God. I realized that the person who landed up on the bridge first was me. I realized that the **I**ndiana **J**ones who appeared was **I**mmanuel **J**esus: God is with us to save.
I have known for some time now that I needed to hear God's voice better if I was to continue with my journey in this life… and when I got home I began to read, "Can You Hear Me?" by Brad Jersak with this in mind having gotten so much out of it the last time I read it. I started to re-read the book and found it very convicting but in a good way because I was led to repent or renew my mind with God's help through prayer in how I see, perceive, and understand God's voice, will, and intentions towards my life. God does not lead us forward and then forsake us. He offers us a better way than we could come up with on our own. No matter where I am at God is with me. He cares for me, comforts me and speaks with me. He goes before me and leads the way as I follow Him. Thank You Jesus, Father God, and Holy Spirit for this certainty.

I realize that my will can tune into or out of the many different voices (God, the flesh, the world, and the demons) that are being broadcast into my mind. To the degree that I am skeptical of hearing God's voice in my life to that degree I displace His voice and allow other voices (the flesh, the world and the demons) to use my skepticism to distance me from God and influence me in bad ways. If I want to hear God, and have Him in my life then I need to humble myself like a child and embrace Him and His ways. This is a gradual process. God is the leader not me.

For some time God has been showing me that He does not mercilessly drive his sheep forward from behind with a whip, harsh loud words, kicking boots, judgmental spirit, criticalness, abrasiveness and with anger. Jesus does not bully us: rather He is gentle, meek, and compassionate. So why does He hold a whip in His hand in the above dream? Jesus cleaned out the Jewish Temple twice in his earthly ministry (once in the beginning, and the other at the end)… and because He lives in me I too am part of His temple. The whip was a sign that He was about to do some major cleaning up of my attitudes and renew my mind so that I might be more useful to Him, and enjoy Him even more than before. This is what He is now doing in my life. The whip also means that He isn't this jolly fat man sitting in Heaven who wouldn't hurt a fly or a mosquito. The Twenty-Third-Psalm describes Jesus as the Good Shepherd that disciplines and guides with staff and rod His flock when they go off course so they will go where He is leading. I now realize that I had tamed Jesus and removed all fear within me that was healthy. The whip was meant to trigger a move in mind to a more well-rounded view of whom Jesus is. Sometimes staying away from sin because of fear is a good thing, especially if one can't do it out of love. When I came to this revelation I felt alive again. Thank you Lord God for putting a healthy fear within me again. I am grateful! Lead the way Oh Great Shepherd of Heaven!

When Truths Turn Into Lies:

On Thursday, September 3, 2009 I realized that a critical word directed against me many years ago at its conception began to grow into something much BIGGER than what it was intended for. The criticism was true, but it was said in such a general way that it wounded me the more ground I gave it. It was so successful that it became a part of how I viewed my identity. It was only when I saw the criticism in the way it was intended, that I could see the BIGGER part for the lie it was. I am now free from that lie! PTL!

Learning Valuable Lessons:

Having forgiven someone for past trespasses we can let un-forgiveness slowly creep in over time for the very thing that we initially forgave. And we can be blind to the fact that the un-forgiveness is creeping in. If we are open to love… then the Holy Spirit will lead us in amazing ways to forgive that person yet again. The Lord taught me this lesson on Thursday, October 23, 2009. I would later realize that moving from un-forgiveness to tolerance is good, but that is not the whole journey. I need to move from tolerance to love, grace, and celebration of those who wounded me. I do this by praying for the agents of my hurt and asking God to put His love for them in my heart and mind.

In learning this lesson it was important that I didn't expect overnight success or quickly answered prayers. God is often hidden in the background preparing stuff for us as we pray in faith for days, weeks, months, and sometimes years according to His will. God prepares gifts like words of knowledge, insights, provisions, relationships, money, food, and chance meetings of impartation... that when embraced bring about new-ness of life, healing, forgiveness, growth and repentance... and that also yield freedom from bondages

or addictions. So be patient with God answering your prayers... as He rewards those who believe in His goodness and believe that He rewards those who approach Him. Give God a chance to act within reason.

Don't think that the process God is leading you through can be discarded for something better. Accept that God is in control and knows better than you do; rejoice instead that He is working on your soul, that you have hope, and have come so much farther than you could have all by yourself. Your faith is not worthless; indeed it has a very great reward!

A Very Special Beginning:

On Saturday, November 14, 2009 at 2PM I was married to Sophie de Marigny at Holy Cross Catholic Church in the presence of God, family and friends. What a glorious day it was!

The day before the marriage ceremony we had a practice session so we would know where and when to stand and sit, what we were going to say, and what was to be expected from all involved. When it came to me practicing the Wedding vows I began to laugh and giggle. I realized afterwards that they were giggles of unbelief and joy. Just like when (Abraham's wife) Sarah laughed a laugh of unbelief when she heard God say to Abraham that she would be with child in a year's time. Having waited so ridiculously long from a human perspective for a child her laughter revealed what was inside of her: unbelief mixed with faith. And then one year later she laughed with such joy when a baby boy was born to her that she named Isaac; that in Hebrew means laughter. On my Wedding day I was full of joy and no longer laughed with unbelief when I said my Wedding vows for real and became one with Sophie. PTL!

Dealing With More Insensitivity:

I knew for a long time that I had insensitivity within me. And I had made many attempts to rid myself from this malady over the years. As a child in South Africa during recess periods while at school I was a loner because my classmates rejected me. I had not thought about those years for a long time… but the Holy Spirit brought those memories to mind on Tuesday, November 24, 2009 as I continued to pray for God to heal me from my insensitivity. I was gently guided by the Holy Spirit to forgive my peers, and to repent from my bitter cynical judgmental attitudes that began to accumulate back then. My insensitivity manifested itself in laughing at those who also wanted justice like I did back then, but were denied that same justice just like had happened to me. My thinking became: "If I can't have my hearts desire, then so should no one else." When I said I was sorry to God and He removed some of the insensitivity and my mind was a little clearer for a while until more insensitivity surfaced.

This time God wanted me to renew my mind yet again. Some people sniff out the darkness (dirty laundry or evil) in others, based on the idea that we are nothing but corrupt before we find the true Jesus. That was part of my thinking although I made some exceptions. Unfortunately such views are judgmental in nature and need to be dropped. The Holy Spirit showed me a while ago that there is genuine goodness next to evil in all fallen human hearts. Jesus even said that tax collectors loved other tax collectors.[92] And that was saying a lot because the pious Jew back then saw tax collectors as sinners, evil, greedy, unclean, traitors, and disloyal to the traditions passed down from Moses. Unfortunately I made a lot of similar judgments against Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses,

[92] Cf. Matthew 5:46

Moslems, and those who's views on the final judgment differed from mine because in my eyes for a long time they threatened the salvation of many (yet Jesus said for me to judge not and condemn not). My attitude to such people was to direct anger, be abrasive and un-kind, and view those belonging to such sects as corrupt, proud, unclean, and delusional and at best not having thought things through properly when it comes to their spirituality. Any flaw I could see in such people who belong to such groups (would confirm my judgments and condemnations against them), and I would magnify and put it forth as evidence for others to not embrace the paths that these groups call everyone to follow. If we are to be holy then our focus should be on seeking forgiveness when we have done any wrongs and loving all those people who cross our paths. The New Testament was written so that we would know God who always loves (the wicked and the upright together) so that we will imitate Him in that love through His power and guidance. Those who use the Bible to foster hatred and intolerance against those who are different have left the path of sanity.

The Golden Rule is not: "Do to others as they do to you" but, "Do to others as you want them to do to you."

I still struggle with how to love others from different faith traditions. My goal is to grow in that love over time with the Holy Spirit's help. Part of me wants to judge others because of what I have been taught, seen, read, and believed from a variety of sources over the years. But something within me was responsible for my judgmental-ism and my insensitivity. I had no idea what it was.

My understanding of Salvation and how to share it with those who have not ever heard it before was in a shambles for a very long time. But I think it boils down to the forgiveness and love that is made possible through individual relationships with Jesus Christ.

Every person is loyal to her or his particular faith tradition at least initially. They love each other within their faith traditions (if ambition is not embraced), and in all likelihood fight with everyone else outside their faith traditions. Supernatural love moves us beyond such differences, and is the very vehicle God uses to win souls to Himself.

God longs to hear us say that we are sorry for our hard heartedness and judging. If we are truly sorry for such behaviors God will forgive us when we confess… and if we give God time to soften our hearts and heal us He will do just that. I have been rough with many people who were either Jehovah Witnesses or Mormons that I have met over the years. I know that I need to love them and build bridges between them and Christ Jesus. All truth, all beauty, all holy thoughts and acts are preparations for the Gospel. If people are not into judging others, then when a person or group judges them they won't convert to that person's or group's ideology, beliefs, and traditions.

A Typical Start To The Day:

My mornings are the most difficult time of the day for me. I usually find myself getting angry or resenting somebody who crosses my path after I wake up and am on my way to work, or while at work… only to realize that the person is a gift from God who reveals to me the selfishness within me and my wanting things to go my way too much. I then pray the full Serenity Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, and the Abiding Prayer along with forgiving with God's help the person who pissed me off (even if they aren't really at fault). Then either the day starts to go well if I am not struggling with psychosis (which I overcome with a single Ativan tablet when needed). Then the day slowly improves as I find my footing.

Regaining My Intuition & Embracing My Common Sense:
For a very long time I would dismiss my intuitions, reasoning ability, and native understanding when encountering new puzzles, challenges or problems with the lie: "Don't bother attempting to solve the puzzle because the answer could be anything" (thinking that the world is full of chaos or obscure reasoning). I wouldn't give myself a chance to guess at the thinking behind many questions or situations or requests. I am surprised that I made it through 10 years of university with this attitude, but I did.
I guess this attitude of mine was part of me being so hard on myself for so long. People do all sorts of things for many different human reasons. Because I have the same nature like the rest of humanity… I too am endowed with some common sense or understanding on how things ought to work. I have now embraced this intuition (as of December 22, 2009)… and discarded the lie: "Don't bother because the answer could be anything."
People like to celebrate new patterns whether they are found in art, music, math, physics, chemistry, engineering, computing, literature, genetics, linguistics, theology, biology, architecture, maintenance, nature, sports, dance or any other pursuit. We also can or do get unexcited, and eventually bored after awhile with those same patterns that we discovered and this causes restlessness. Whatever patterns exist, God has given some people more and others less insight into understanding or seeing these patterns. Whatever the case… I know that I have some insights… and that I don't always have to rely on the supervision of others when doing tasks. I have a mind of my own and can strategize without having to defer to someone else all the time.
People also don't like to be boxed in; they want freedom; and so they search out new stuff that seems less organized, less structured, less obvious, or less simple. They seek out mystery.
A New Insight For Me That Brought A Large Degree Of Freedom & Life:
Jesus said that truth liberates. J.R.R. Tolkien in his book called: "The Lord Of The Rings" touches on a truth that I never realized until Tuesday, December 29, 2009 applies to me and that started to bring more freedom to me in the way I relate to those who cross my path each day.
The truth recorded in Tolkien's book is that people usually only see in others what they see in themselves. If it is pride or envy we see in our selves then we see pride in others; if it is greed we see greed; if it is the desire for power, we too see the desire for power in others…. What I saw in myself was the desire for a clean conscience and I naively thought that everyone was like that. It is true that no one likes guilt… but some people can live with it better than others do. We also can change our beliefs to deal with guilt either in a good way or bad ways. Since I was so hard on myself for such a terribly long time… I was unnaturally hard on others. So I felt for a long time that others when they did something morally unacceptable were as hard on themselves like I was for such a long time, and therefore they were also hard on others. I also realize that I need to treat others the way I want to be treated. But that doesn't mean others see things my way. No one wants to be hard on him or her self. Because I was so hard on myself I was very critical of myself… and therefore I felt that I could expect that from others too. This would help evaporate my confidence, courage, faith, joy, and expectations when standing up for the truth (as I see it) at whatever levels in navigating my relationships. When I realized these truths I felt liberated and a burden drop from my shoulders. I also got in touch with my ability to feel my anger in real time when it comes to wrongs committed

real or imagined. My physical posture also improved with my back pain being greatly alleviated. I became conscious of every day things such as dangers involved with driving vehicles. I began to see and feel things like I did before I became ill. PTL!

Looking At Things Differently:

Since I focused so much on the wrongs that others have done to me so that I could forgive them… my thinking became jaded; thinking that those same persons aren't that nice to begin with. But after I forgave them and the Holy Spirit brought nothing more to mind, I was led to re-focus on those same people and look at the good in them to balance out the bad they may have done. As a result my distorted views melted away. There is always good somewhere within each person because we are all created in the image of God. People change, people have histories, people have stories, and most people are both agents and victims of hurts. Anger properly directed and dealt with turns into compassion. When I realized all of this on Friday, January 15, 2010, I began to see people for the better. I began to feel more loving towards people instead of wondering whom next to forgive so that I could eventually get free. When we forgive the resulting attitude is love.

Insights About God Abiding In Me:

After one has gotten beaten up because of life's tragedies, storms, random acts of violence, denied justice (not necessarily retributive), and seeing that life is not fair a lot of the time… we can become pretty cynical, critical, and judgmental towards life, people in general, institutions, and God Himself. If we want God to abide in us (fully) then we are going to have to rid ourselves of the attitudes (walls) that see God as uncaring, fickle, capricious, or in a bad light with lesser glory than what He really has. God is LOVE… and He comforts those who mourn as one of the beatitudes promises.[93] If we want Jesus to fully abide in us then we have to jettison our scoffing and critical attitudes and see with the eyes of faith. We will also have to work on dealing with whatever anger or feelings of unfairness that we have directed against God. God is full of love, comfort, patience and goodness. When we deal with our cynicism and invite God more into our lives, hearts, and being, He will come making His PRESENCE felt by bringing PEACE, PERSPECTIVE, and supernatural GRACE and LOVE. God loves us but we can put up walls or unbelief and hatred that prevent His love from getting through to each of us. Those walls also keep us from loving others genuinely. Give it a try… slowly lower your walls and let the King of Glory in… you won't be disappointed. [94] This does not mean that we won't ever be angry with God again. When we are, we will accept it and deal with it based on our faith, our past up to our present relationships with Him and move on in strength and assurance. This whole insight was a process in learning.

Faith, Doubt, & Love:

For such a long time I believed a lie when it came to how I navigated some of my relationships. In particular I felt that God had very high and strict standards for me and everyone else when it came to us hearing His voice. My motto was: "Doubt not" in the most rigid sense. And if I did doubt then I pictured God distancing Himself from me. I

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[93] Cf. Matthew 5:4

[94] I am indebted to Tom & Donna Cole for the genesis of the ideas in this paragraph from their book: Pure Heart: Restoration of the Heart Through the Beatitudes, Xulon Press © 2008.

remember in one of my early jobs as a young adult where I had one pretty difficult supervisor. He expected me to have a sense or understanding on how things worked, and if I showed any incompetence he harshly rebuked me over and over again. And through the years I painted that attitude (the one of my supervisor) on to the face of God, and those people important to me. I have now learned that God is patient with us and treats us according to where we are at; not where we think He expects us to be. If we are spiritually a 2-year-old babe He will treat us as such; if a teenager he will treat us as such; if an adult as such, and so forth. Faith doesn't mean we have no doubt, it means we believe but not perfectly. God knows that doubt is part of the package when it comes to our relationships with Him. He doesn't grow silent and cold when we get confused and our minds fill with doubts. He is one-hundred-percent there for us all the time.
I now know that I need to treat people where they are at instead of focusing on their faults and where I want them to be at. I am not a judge, and I have problems changing myself… so how can I force or demand from others to do what would make me happy? Demanding people to behave the way we want them to be is a difficult road to take that leads away from love, away from reality, and away from God. The only way to accept where people are at is to pray for it and to abide in Jesus as much as is possible.

Changing Strategies:

For the longest time I would attempt to use all my reasoning power, intuition, and brute force to figure out what to do in so far as my spiritual maladies were concerned. But at the end of each hunt it would be God who stepped in and gave me the much-needed light to conquer the darkness. Gradually I would become dependant on God through Listening Prayer as talked about by Brad Jersak in his book called, "Can you hear me?" Every time I read the book the easier it gets for me to hear God's voice. At first because I was so whacked out in my mind because of my schizophrenia I heard God's voice mainly through other people (Christian or non-Christian alike). I still hear it that way at times… but being an analytical person… I needed to understand in clarity the foundations for Listening Prayer that Brad does such a good job laying out in his book. But it took me a long time to understand it because my mind was over run by forces that are evil, dark and deceptive and intent on blinding me. Thankfully I persevered, and now I am enjoying the good fruits that God promises those who don't give up on Him. Thank you Brad… I am grateful for your commitment to searching for the truth. Thank you Holy Trinity for showing me the way to freedom! Amen!

What Real Anger feels like:

On Tuesday, February 23, 2010 I realized at one point in the day that I was angry about an incident but that things were different: The anger felt right and was devoid of debate and did not make me feel weak anymore. I realized that God was redirecting my imploded anger out into the open into its proper place. Thank you Jesus!

Trading In A Slave Mentality For Being A Beloved:

People who have a slave mentality when it comes to God don't focus on or realize the love God has for them. I thought that if God ever became distant, bored and un-interested in me I'd pursue Him as much as I could to not lose Him because I love Him... but now I realize that such thoughts know nothing about the love God has for me. It is true however that God does want me to pursue Him and He hides Himself occasionally just like a lover will do to arouse a beloved.

Dealing With The Stronghold Of Hatred (A BIG Missing Piece Of The Puzzle):

On Wednesday, February 24, 2010 I found myself challenged by guilt early in the morning only to maintain the ground I had won in my heart through faith in God earlier in the week. After this battle I began to love others in my path more genuinely (remembering that I need to treat people where they are at; not where I wanted them to be) only to lose that simple affection and gentleness in my heart and actions through making judgments later on in the day. Then I became very hard on myself because I felt defeated by regressing in love only to later realize that being hard on myself was self-defeating. So I gave up being hard on myself and eventually gained (through patience, prayer and repentance) a more humble attitude along with the affection and gentleness I had earlier in the day. But I still felt there was more that God wanted to give me. When I got home I worked through the steps of Inner Healing found in Brad Jersak's book called, "Can You Hear Me?". I initially had trouble visualizing my place of refuge within my heart but eventually I did. Then I realized (by asking Jesus) that the bad fruit I still bore often was insensitivity/ judging/and being critical towards others. I confessed these sins to Jesus as I looked at the bad fruit spanning over many years of my life. I then asked Jesus where He was in my heart and I immediately saw a HUGE STONE BOX that stood silently and HEAVY in the darkness. All of a sudden the BOX flew a part HEAVILY with light piercing and evaporating the darkness. All of a sudden hundreds of young children aged eight to twelve (or so) started to run all over the place wrestling with each other creating a commotion and scene where the BOX had stood. It did not make sense to me but eventually I realized that the devil was responsible for the chaos. I commanded the demons to leave and the children disappeared with the light shining brighter and very intensely in my heart. I asked the Lord what the stone tablets were and He said they were hatred. They were hatred of self, others, and God. This hatred was the root that bore the fruit of insensitivity in my life. I told God I was sorry for hating Him, others, and myself and that I wanted to change. I also asked Him to forgive me. That He did. I felt at PEACE! As time passed I found that my attitude was becoming gentler, more affectionate, more human, and less robot like. Unfortunately, at first I thought the hatred came from a traumatic event earlier in my life like the demons wanted me to think. Through this deception I wrongly hurt some people through accusations in a way that should never have happened. I would then realize that I am not allowed to assume which events or memories I reacted to with hatred out of anger. Instead I needed to ask God where it came from; and that way I wouldn't have hurt anyone. It was too late in this instance… I had hurt two people who did not deserve the wrongful judgments I made against them. I would later realize that my hatred grew out of my intense anger from being rejected as a child by my peers in South Africa. Hatred was a root that bore my insensitivity, dried up my compassion, made me maliciously judgmental, a stone thrower, and prevented me from loving others supernaturally. Love and hatred can't abide together in the same place. Light destroys the darkness: darkness can't live alongside the light. "Anger is an emotion; it is neither good nor bad, it's what we do with it that determines whether it becomes acceptable or unacceptable."[95] Anger if not dealt with properly can lead to resentments that lead to addictions; or anger can lead to hatred if not dealt with properly that leads to insensitivity (along with addictions). Insensitivity takes many forms like

[95] Peter Herbeck on "Crossing the Goal" streamed on my computer from the Web.

(A) Not being unable to feel compassion for or treating people with gentleness;
(B) Being judgmental, and critical in evil ways;
(C) It can lead to being verbally abusive;
(D) It can lead to physical violence;
(E) It can lead to sexual violence such as rape; and finally
(F) It can lead to murder.

For me my anger led to hatred that showed itself in me doing (A), (B), and sometimes (C). Surprisingly insensitivity is not just the result of hatred, pride and judgment. Later on I'd find out that it can also result from wanting to help someone in such a way that a burden forms. When the burden is not relieved it causes dread and blocks empathy and sympathy in the moment and this is what insensitivity is.

Regarding Work And Hatred:

It is so easy for me to walk ahead of Jesus and choose what I think I need to repent from so that freedom will come. Freedom comes only when Jesus puts His finger on sin that He wants us to repent from and as a result we repent with His help. Any repentance done without God calling for it is done in self-righteousness. Learning this lesson has been a very difficult one for me. Today on Tuesday, March 2, 2010 as I practiced some more Listening Prayer I was led by Jesus into my heart to see one of the STONE slabs (mentioned above) still standing that represented HATRED in my heart. I asked Jesus what the Hatred was directed at? Only to be told by Him that it represented my attitude towards work. I know that I have motivated myself at one point in time or another in most areas of my life by hatred, and work was one of them. In fact, I was so dependent on motivating myself with Hatred when it came to work that it prevented me from loving my work. I always did the best I could but I could not get to the next level because that hatred always called for relief. And I only got relief when I did the bulk of each day's workload. Any extra stuff would only be done occasionally. When I repented in faith with God's help and leading from that hatred that one LARGE BLACK slab fell into dust. I felt more stable, more at PEACE, and more in my center. Thank you Holy Trinity!

My Shame & Your Shame?

On Friday, March 12, 2010 as I watched the Paralympics on TV held in BC, Canada, I found myself spitting out pride and scoffing at the fan fair during the opening ceremony celebrations. I realized it was a block to love and promptly asked God what that block was. He said it was SHAME – the shame I carried around with me, and that I assumed everyone else should also carry. God then removed my feelings of shame only for me to enjoy such a show for the first time.

About a month later on Tuesday, April 6, 2010 I realized that I needed to ask God what was behind the block known as shame. He named it: "Moroni!" I realized that Moroni is a demon that deceives people into thinking that they are going to become gods. So why "Moroni" since I'm not a Mormon and don't believe that I will ever be deity? Growing up I wanted to belong and would say anything to belong, to the point of giving glory to my peers that was not properly theirs. When I did not find receptivity I felt shame, and out of my shame I plastered compliments on others so they'd like me.

I commanded the demonic influence to leave… it left and the issue was completely resolved. Thank you ever so much Lord Jesus Christ! Amen!

Smart & Dumb Revisited:

Many people have told me that I am intelligent, yet I felt dumb for such a long time period in my life. A little while ago I wrote a pen-pal-letter to our sponsor child with World Vision and I gave it to my wife Sophie to read. She had to rewrite it because the language I used was too grownup or too intellectual. Sophie put what I said into words that would be understood by any child. But I felt what I had written was fine because I used BIG words and that made me feel intelligent; it made me feel good in a bad way. During my university days I felt very stupid at times when comparing myself to others. I therefore wanted to be seen and told I was intelligent. I wanted to look intelligent. I wanted whatever I did to have that "mark" on it that said I was "intelligent". The down side of this is that I prized intelligence more than simplicity, and it made me insensitive towards people who did things that I felt intelligent people would not do. I felt it was more important to sound intelligent than to communicate love to people. I finally saw this in myself on Saturday, March 13, 2010 and I asked God to remove this block in my heart and mind that prevented me from loving others more fully. The block stemmed from my pride.

A real fruit from this healing was that I became that much more open to hearing what others have to say: I became a much better listener. Thank you Jesus!

Realizing That Plenty Of Renovations Are In Order For My Heart:

As I looked into my heart I saw rock hard blackness on the floor with little bits of broken stones sticking up everywhere the large stone slabs had stood. I really disliked this… and I wanted to see my heart as soft as flesh like God had promised me (either that or one with flowers, trees bearing good fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, compassion, and genuine affection), springs of water (the Holy Spirit), bushes with berries full of life). Later on I would realize that I needed to patiently work the Step Method from Brad Jersak's book: "Can You Hear Me?" to rid myself from all that cold hatred and resentment that visually looks like black stone in my heart so that God could replace it with His goodness, life, peace, warmth, beauty and love. I also want the gloomy darkness to be removed and instead lit with Jesus (the real Light of the world). I realize that this would be done in God's time.

An Easter Gift From God:

God had dealt with the root of hatred in my heart, but a structure still stood where the foundation of hatred had stood beneath it. That structure represents the machinery that bore the fruit of insensitivity in my life supported by my hatred. Because of the hatred I had established in my heart before my teens; I lived out of it even when I was not conscious of it. It poisoned the way I saw things, the way I judged others, the way I criticized others, and the way I gossiped about or slandered others. I had been wounded by my peers, so I wounded others… unaware of Jesus' love. My malice put distance between others and myself as a result. Even when I began to follow Jesus this blackness was in my heart waiting to be dealt with through repentance with God's help. Then on Saturday, April 3, 2010 God made me aware of this construct within my heart (i.e. the way I judged others, the way I criticized others, and the way I gossiped about or slandered others), I then saw what I had "done" in this way in the past, and "thought and in some case spoken to others" in the present as morally wrong for the first time. When I saw it for what it was: evil; God kindly removed the bulk of it from my heart. I then realized this sin was easy for me fall into. I realized that my anger, which I often did not acknowledge or was not aware of, led immediately to either resentment or hatred. I also

realized that I have a learning curve to go through: I need to learn how to better deal with my anger.

Thankfully I got a book for Christmas from Sophie by Dr. Gary Chapman called, "Anger: Handling A Powerful Emotion In A Healthy Way." It is helping me get in touch with my anger and also helping me channel it in constructive ways. There are five Steps mentioned in the book meant to practice anger in healthy ways. Here they are:

1. Consciously acknowledge to yourself that you are angry,
2. Restrain your immediate response,
3. Locate the focus of your anger,
4. Analyze your options,
5. Take constructive action.[96]

The more I practice these Steps the more centered I am becoming. I am starting to recognize when I am angry, and even to feel my anger. I am starting to feel like I am getting some control over my anger. I feel stronger, and I am getting a real sense for what are trivial matters that need not be pursued (i.e. where I either forgive the persons who cross my boundaries, or see my reaction as not fitting the facts and therefore realizing my anger wasn't warranted and needs to be dismissed). I am also getting a real sense for what I need to pursue or confront in loving and diplomatic ways. As for taking constructive action when people really annoy me; I find myself initially before a fork in the road. Do I continue to nurse my anger, or do I choose to love with God's help? Love is a choice; and a short prayer to Jesus asking Him to help me love the person I am angry with is always answered in dynamic ways.

In short, I am looking at High Definition TV (a more nuanced view of anger) instead of an outdated Black and White TV as far as my anger is concerned. Thankfully God has provided a way where I can examine my reactions to events that happen in my life and therefore steer my responses in loving ways away from resentment and away from hatred. This is a learning curve that I am now beginning to achieve. PTL!

Later on I'd realize that sometimes I get angry and heated in attempts to control, direct, move, motivate, or try to change what I disliked in the behaviors belonging to other people. To realize that it is God's kindness, patience, and mercy that leads me to repentance means that I ought to follow God's example and do what He would do: be kind, gentle, meek, and merciful to those who annoy or morally fail me. My anger/harshness does not achieve the righteousness purposes of God in my own life or in the lives of those people I wrongly think I can control with my anger.

Life Is A Journey:

During Easter, Sophie, the kids and I went to a party put on by Mickey and Mini (not their real names) a kind and generous couple from our church. Mickey has often said that he views life as a journey. But I never understood what he meant by that. He said it again on Easter Sunday and that started me thinking. I finally understood what he was getting at. For me up until Tuesday, April 6, 2010 I went through life anticipating the good times and dreading the unpleasant times in between the good times. But now I See life as a journey and accept the good along with the bad, I have perspective, I see that I am going somewhere, and I am not worried that each good time will eventually come to an end. I

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[96] Gary Chapman, "Anger: Handling A Powerful Emotion In A Healthy Way", Northfield Publishing Chicago © 1999, 2007, p. 51.

now know the good times live on in my memories. Also the bad times don't shake my faith in God, because they are a reminder that I am not in Heaven yet, and more I enter the bad times in solidarity with those who suffer in this life. Therefore I feel confident, joyful, and strong. I am at PEACE. I am FREE. Thank you YAHWEH! Thank you Mickey!

Pursuing God:

Being aware of when to use the right principle in any situation is a good place to be at when that awareness comes from God. God is foremost each Christian's Father through Christ Jesus. Fruit flows from relationship with God. Trusting God as Shepherd to lead me and feed me from the tree of life, and refusing to focus on the tree of knowledge of good and evil is the path I want to pursue. This requires faith and living in the unknown. Focusing on only what you know keeps one from learning new things; puts things into boxes, makes the joy evaporate, and makes the love dry up.

People who only pursue principles rarely find God; people who pursue God will find Him and will eventually learn how to love others deeply because Jesus teaches them how to be free.

The Gift Of No Longer Having To Wrestling So Fiercely With Demons As Before:

On Tuesday, April 21, 2010 I attempted to meet with the Lord in my heart visually, but instead of seeing Jesus I saw two images: (1) a large threatening snake ready to strike, and (2) a scorpion seeking to inflict pain with its sting. This puzzled me for some time. So I asked Jesus what the meaning of these images were… and He eventually answered me by turning the snake and scorpion into flimsy cheap and easily breakable plastic replicas that fell apart in handling them. I would later realize that this is Jesus way of telling me that the sort of intense fights I had with those evil spirits within my mind and heart because of my schizophrenia is over with.

Yes I still have schizophrenia and that means my perceptions are still tinkered with often; I still have distorted, confused, paranoid, and delusional ideas and beliefs entering my mind (authored by either me or demons) and I struggle to find reality as a result. Thankfully my wife Sophie sets me straight when I am in really bad places. I still suffer often: sometimes intensely. But I do have those times when I have real pleasure, joy, and peace.

Life this side of heaven means that I will struggle with my sinfulness or my selfishness, struggle to love, struggle to achieve, and struggle to follow Jesus day in and day out; because this is what I am experiencing at this juncture. Aiming for love means pain needs to be embraced. There is no escaping pain in this life if one is not going to take short cuts. That is the message from Jesus Christ's cross: I need to carry my own cross, and that means I need to embrace the pain and disappointments that come my way. But there are real joys to be realized in this life too. Thankfully Jesus is with me, and that gives me hope, confidence, faith, and courage to deal with each block against authentic love that comes my way regularly as I journey a long with Jesus the Block-Buster. Many have gone before me and I am grateful for their prayers, wisdom, and encouragement. I guess life is lived best one step at a time following Jesus the real Light of the world.

Approaching Inner Healing:

I now know that I need to chill out when it comes to relationship and me pursuing inner healing with God. I can't force things if I want God to partake in the healing process. There is no healing if God does not partake. With Jesus' help I am dealing with baggage

and blocks to love very often at this time. Thanks to Brad Jersak's book: "Can You Hear Me?" I am making great strides in claiming the freedom; peace, hope, and sanity promised me by God so many years ago. Praise God!

Today, on Thursday May 6, 2010 as I was taking in Brad Jersak's teaching online on Listening Prayer I became aware of an attitude within me that was hard and that wanted to MASTER Brad's teaching on Listening Prayer right then instantly. I wanted to nail it down; fit my box around it; QED it like one does with proofs in Mathematics. I realized that this approach was incompatible with pursuing relationship with God; this attitude that was nurtured in university and lasted until now. When I studied math, and later read books on spirituality to master them I made the principles I studied more my focus than God. The principles became more and more my rigid formulas to get a hold of God. Surprisingly the more I became focused on mastering the principles in the way I describe here (putting pressure on myself, being hard on myself, being too analytical, attempting to milk all phrases for what they are worth, being overbearing, wanting absolute knowledge or certainty, wanting to take it all in at once, impatient, not giving myself a chance, not letting the process rely on simple childlike faith, relying on my own intellect and energy, and being robotic) the less they worked, and the more restless I got. When I approach God with child like faith I am at peace and things happen.

Brad's principles, insights, and approaches are very good… I was just attempting to use them in unproductive ways every now and then because I was so desperate for revelations, insights, healing, and intimacy with God.

Another Lesson On Humility:

When we have an ideal that we aim for like being a certain type of woman or man, we have to be careful, that our focus is not fitting a certain mold, instead of caring for or being concerned for those people we meet on our path each day. It is so easy to love humanity, and hate our neighbor. Humble people care for those that cross their paths, whereas proud people are more concerned about fitting a certain mold they deem as perfection and are less concerned about others than the way they themselves look.

Jealousy:

Growing up I was a very jealous little boy and eventually jealous teenager. When I saw that somebody (usually my brother) **seemingly (not actually)** got more or better things than I did… I would question the love of the bearer of those gifts and my jealousy would turn to judgment that turned to anger that made me think the world was jaded and unfair. As with most of my spiritual maladies (judgments, resentments, insensitivity, anger, hatred…), I have often had a physical sense, a place in my body where I carried the spiritual burden in the form of pain. The same is true with my jealousy. These physical senses would come and go depending on whether I judged or repented from my judgments. Today, on Sunday May 9, 2010 I could feel these feelings of jealousy from years back for the first time in years and see them for what they are. It seems like most spiritual malady stems from poorly directed anger that comes from a sense of rightly or wrongly seen injustices perpetrated against one. But that is not the whole story.

Jealous is much like envy. "Envy follows pride. Envy hates those above us because they are above us; those who are our equals because they are our equals, and those below us because they might some day over take us."[97] Jealousy is rooted in pride. I confessed my

[97] Not sure of which Saint said it.

pride to God, told Him I was sorry for it and realized that perhaps that was my parents' biggest battle in disciplining me as I grew up under their authority. Especially considering that for a long time as an adult I could not remember what 99.9% of the disputes were that I had with my parents growing up. Are you surprised? I'm not; not now at least.

Following & Obedience Instead Of Guilt:

Some people shy away from inquiring in prayer from God what He desires for our lives. The reason they give is that they are afraid that God will ask them to do something they really don't want to do and that would bring plenty of guilt…so not wanting to live with guilt they ignore finding out what God wants in their lives. This mentality is misguided. First of all God asks us to do plenty of good things outside of prayer that we don't always do. But that does not stop us from attempting to follow and praise Him. Why? Because we know we make mistakes, do wrong and sin. But we also know there is forgiveness for our sins if we seek it.

Thinking that God's ideas or plans are burdensome is not a good place to be at. Remember the parable of the Master who entrusted his wealth to three servants, one of which hid His wealth in the ground in an attempt to forget about it because He thought His master was a hard man. Every time we refuse to set our plans before God to hear His opinion on the matters we act like that lazy servant. I don't want to be like that lazy servant.

Next we are commanded to love God with all our minds, hearts and strengths. God's grace is not the result of our good deeds.[98] Even if we seek God to follow Him to where He leads we aren't guaranteed joy…. Real joy is a result of the HOLY SPIRIT within us. We can find pleasure in keeping Jesus' commandments like when leading somebody to faith in Jesus but that joy is a result of God's grace. If we ignore God's commandments and sin we will feel guilty and I know that is not a very good place to be.

All of this to say that yes God will at times ask us to do things that are difficult and grate against our image, pride, and boundaries. God knows that we aren't perfect… and knows what we are made from. He will give us things to do that fall within our faith's ability to accomplish them. I choose to believe that God is a good taskmaster, is trustworthy, and has more for us than we can conceive or imagine. This takes faith and is the best and safest place to be in. Remember Jonah.

One Day At A Time:

Today on Tuesday May 18, 2010 I got very angry with somebody because for the past while he never gave a hoot about anyone beside himself. I hated what the person did. And that took all the charity (for the person) within me away because my anger turned into hating the person. God showed me that I needed to forgive and accept what the person did. But I struggled to forgive and accept what the person did today because I realized that he may very likely be a pain in the butt for a long time to come. This angered me more… to the point that it became too difficult to forgive this person because of the hassle I was anticipating from this person in the future. Then it dawned on me that I need to live one day at a time because, "today" is all I have. God only provides grace one day at a time. I was then able to forgive and accept the person today, and let God carry the weight of all the tomorrows for me in the now.

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[98] Neil T. Anderson, "Breaking The Bondage Of Legalism" ebook.

Asking For Mercy & Not Demanding It:
Today on Thursday May 20, 2010 I did something to offend a fellow employee at work. I apologized but there was no reconciliation. I then became angry and began to tell myself why it shouldn't be so difficult for the other employee to forgive me. I felt so justified in my reasoning until the Holy Spirit (my Counselor) pointed out to me that I can't demand mercy or forgiveness from those whom I have hurt, offended, or did a wrong against in some way. Anyone who demands mercy is not in touch with the reality that they did something wrong. They don't want mercy; they want people to forget their wrongs because in their eyes their wrongs aren't that serious (after all they are a good person). Those who demand mercy think they have earned that reconciliation. Only those who dispense mercy can receive it in a humble fashion.[99]

Beliefs Based On Good Times & Bad Times:
If one has gone through much suffering eventually one's notions or beliefs regarding how one views God will be challenged, and one might not be conscious about the process all the time either. Bad times most often are used by demons to try to convince us that God is not as good as He claims to be. Where as good times are most often used by demons to try to convince us that we are good enough and don't need God.
In my case I went through nearly 19 years of trouble, pain, poverty, suffering, confusion, and stretching. This has led often to me seeing God as one who has been hard on me, and here is where the demons jump in trying to lie and move me away from God. Yes God does let things happen to us that our own parents wouldn't ever dream of letting happen to us. All falsehoods begin with fractions of particular truths. The demons want us to believe that God enjoys seeing us suffer; that He is hard to please, uncaring, high maintenance and anal. If we are not alerted to the lies they will jade our thinking of God, our testimony, our joy and stagnate our relationship with God if not kill it given enough time and allow more deceptions.

Dealing With A Mocking, And Sneering Attitude:
As I read my Bible during the evening on Tuesday, May 25, 2010 I tried to imagine Jesus walking along the shores of the lake of Galilee and I realized (with the Holy Spirit's help) that there was within me a resenting, mocking and sneering attitude (where I saw planet earth as boring, and a drudgery with too much energy needing to be expended to enjoy it for what it was worth) that had grown over the years but which I had never repented from (Can you imagine how I saw God in this dark corner of my heart because of the dark way I saw His creation? No wonder I resented Him for putting me on Planet earth). On the other hand I have really enjoyed taking pictures of nature, but that was about the extent of my appreciation for God's creation. The attitude I had was one where I did not see nature and planet earth as worth enjoying, exploring with wonder and excitement to the *fullest* like any normal child would. Jesus said that unless we become like little children we could not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. To some degree I was grateful for the beauty found in nature, but I was also very ungrateful to God for the rest of it. I realized with my attitude that I wasn't even enjoying planet earth the way God wanted me to, so how could I enjoy Heaven if I ever got there. My attitude had to change. So I prayed to God repenting in faith about my bad attitude towards His creation and His part in creating it. Thank you Lord God for showing me this. I am grateful for your generosity.

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[99] Cf. the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 5 (The Beatitudes from Jesus).

God Is Enough!

Because I went through so much inner healing, I thought that I might become a Drug and Alcohol counselor some day… and with that hope I felt that I needed as many answers, insights, and principles to be able to help those I'd some day counsel. Each heart is very mysterious; it doesn't matter how many principles one has because there will always be something in each heart that the principles we have don't cover. Even though I knew this… I had compartmentalized it and promptly put pressure on myself to know as much as possible. Thankfully on Tuesday, June 1, 2010 I listened to a sermon by Greg Laing from PGCC where he pointed out that we don't need to have it all figured out. Believing this truth takes off the pressure to do it all by oneself.... All I need is to know the One that knows it all: Jesus or God. What I do want is more dependence and better communication with God, and to be able to help others develop a relationship with God where they can enjoy and communicate with God in ways that will foster growth, freedom, hope, and joy through the storms of life. Coming to these conclusions my weak legs immediately became strong instead of feeling like flimsy rubber. I had thought that my weak legs were a result of sitting in my bedroom year after year waiting for my medication to heal my mind. Thank you Greg for your wonderful sermon! And thank you Jesus for making this miracle possible!

Focusing On The Unknown In A Teachable Fashion:

So many people focus only on what they know. These rarely discover anything new. Those who open their minds to the unknown, and who ask the right questions grow in knowledge, don't become stagnant, and journey into the future with a rewarded curiosity. No one gets to an unknown destination by a familiar pathway to paraphrase Saint John of The Cross.

With this said I am finding my mind being transformed by the Holy Spirit, I am seeing things in new ways, asking new questions, jettisoning old attitudes and beliefs that are useless or incompatible with the way of Jesus. My worries and concerns are changing. The Holy Spirit is mightily altering my approach to relationships with others. I am now teachable, growing, non-judgmental, no longer mean-spirited and no longer weighed down like I was before with so many burdens.

I now also have a new approach to starting each new day because of these insights. I no longer go by with only what I know… I try to remain humble, open to new ideas or the unknown instead of falling into the ruts of my lost, forgotten, empty, and useless way of seeing things in the past. The Holy Spirit is renewing my mind in the way I see things because I am now teachable more so than ever before. What a pleasant place I find myself in: Oh the PEACE I am now experiencing. Thank you Ever-Living-God!

Changing My Strategy:

During my university days I derived ideas and theorems from first principles instead of memorizing the actual results. I put a lot of pressure on myself to get good at it… but I did it because I felt I had a bad memory. I attempted to do something similar when encountering new ideas later on in life that I wanted to memorize. I was always looking for something beneath the actual ideas in order to remember them. This did not work like I had hoped it would because often there would be nothing beneath the ideas to latch onto so I immediately forgot what I wanted to remember. On Friday June 4, 2010 God made me aware of this bad strategy and I saw it for what it was and gladly jettisoned the baggage with His help. Yet again, I am able to focus on things like other people do and

remember more easily the ideas/terms/names/and places that interest me instead of using pressure and my misguided strategy. Praise God who does not over look any detail!

Dealing With False Acceptance:

Have you ever read something thing and not realized an important consequence of what was written? With me this happens quite often. In the Gospel of Matthew we read:

And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.'[100]

What always went through my mind when I read this was, "Yeah but Jesus hadn't done anything yet" not realizing what I was thinking. It took a sermon from Greg Laing for me to see my folly.

Father God's love for his only begotten Son was not based on what the Son did. And the same is true for us. God is love. If we aren't receiving God's love then it is because we have turned away from Him, or have set up walls around us so His love can't get through to us. God loves us no matter what we do. But He does desire for us to love Him, our neighbors, and ourselves. God hates no one in the emotional sense of the word. The fact that Father God loves Jesus even before He began his ministry… showed me that God's love for me was not conditional and that He won't love me more when I do His will. What a relief.

Repenting From More Arrogance:

Being a man who has some pride in my work I like it when things are done right. I love to see a competent job done most of the time. When I see somebody who gives the impression that they might not do a competent job I don't like it. There is nothing wrong with taking pride in our jobs. But if we are arrogant we may seem humble when in fact we are pompous or proud in a bad sense. In, "Kissing The Leper" by Brad Jersak as I began to read chapter 13: "Keepers Of The Books" I realized that I had a hard heart towards people with developmental disabilities… as if they were nuisances that needed to be tolerated and kept in their places… even though I have a MAJOR mental illness myself. I asked the Lord what was beneath my insensitivity. He promptly replied, "ARROGANCE." I then repented from my pompous and proud attitude with God's help and proceeded to enjoy the chapter very much having jettisoned more of my pride. Oh the freedom we find from the things we leave behind.

Listening Prayer:

Having devoured Brad Jersak's book called, "Can You Hear Me?" I felt for some time that I needed to remember all the wholesome anointed thinking/theology/and arguments used by Brad to establish what he calls, "Listening Prayer" as a valid Christian practice. But this attempt at remembering actually drained my confidence in meeting Jesus. I realized that I did not have to remember all the details on how I adopted, "Listening Prayer" in my life. This insight took more pressure off me. How difficult can it be to have a relationship with God, now that I know how to discern His voice from others with valid tests? Taking my focus off the theology, and putting it on God makes a BIG difference in how my relationship with God is developing. Thank you Brad! Amen!

Praying For Freedom From Insecurity:

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[100] 3:17 NRSV

Yesterday, Thursday, June 23, 2010 as I went to spend time with God, the Lord told me to deal with my insecurities. For so many years I went through experiences that reinforced and weighed me down with insecurities. Following the advice from Brad Jersak's book, "Can You Hear Me?" I went through memory after memory where I experience insecurity and invited Jesus into each situation as I re-lived each memory. I can't believe how many memories there were. Needless to say I don't feel as insecure as I was before. Thank you Jesus!

Removing Some Of My Doubt:

In the past when anyone would say, "All you need to overcome an annoying bad habit or stronghold is to ask God" I'd respond with unbelief, this despite having such prayers of my own answered by God on many occasions. Why? The answer is because I had compartmentalized my thinking. My unbelief made me judge those who had simple faith in God to do great things in our lives. I thought that one needed to learn deep theological mysteries about God and humans to build understanding in order to overcome annoying habits, or strongholds. And that was my aim or goal. But with this attitude came pride. It is important to note that even if we understand why we are the way we are, only God has the power to transform our behaviors without us becoming self-righteous. God rewards faith, and faith brings understanding and wisdom. Faith does not come from human wisdom. Faith is a gift from God. That is why God reveals Himself to children not those who consider themselves wise.

It is true: "We have not because we ask not". When we have child like faith (not simplistic, childish, or naïve faith) a faith that is pure and holy; not jaded or cynical; a faith that is not more doubt than confidence in God; that faith in the goodness of God does more than what we could ever hope for or imagine, because God is worthy of that faith. We aren't "special" or "better than others" because of our faith. Faith isn't some thing that we muster and build up by our own strength or understanding. Faith doesn't demand, or obligate God to do things for us.

God does not always answer our requests immediately (hence the need for patience and perseverance)… but if we don't give up (work on getting to know and be friends with God, i.e. spend time with Him) He will eventually set in place what is necessary for victory and lasting PEACE! Thank you Lord God for setting me straight.

Embracing Jesus' Offer For Rest:

On Wednesday, June 30, 2010 I asked the Lord what if any burdens I still carried that I was unaware of but that He could see I was still carrying. I immediately saw this bright shiny silver tin can, and the word: "Beggar" came into my mind. I realized that I was still holding onto my plan "B" that stood for "Begging" if plan "W" that stood for "working" brought long term unemployment, debt, or even homelessness. I realized that God was calling me to jettison my Beggar mentality. The plan "B" was obsolete unless many BIG changes occurred that would make it viable again. Yet I still fingered it and toyed with it at times. For a long time part of me did not want to become healthy, because I saw my disability as a security blanket if ever financial chaos was to re-enter my life. I did not want to collect benefits that I was not entitled to. For a long time I did not want to give up my disability because I was not self-sufficient as far as finances were concerned (Hence the desire to not want to be healthy).

True, I will always need my medications, and that will always be provided through the BC Ministry for Persons With Disabilities. I am now married, and people depend on me.

I am carrying my own weight through the grace of God. I do have faith that God will look after my family and me. Yes I do have some fears, but they are reasonable and don't loom as large and menacing as they did in the past. Jesus wants me to put more trust in Him to lead me and care for me as time goes by. Yes I exchange plan "B" for the security of the Great Shepherd. I am no longer a beggar. I want to be healthy (even while being dependent on medications) and stand like a man tackling my challenges with God directing the way. Thank you Jesus! Amen, and Amen!

Open & Closed Strategies:

Accepting or seeing things the way they are is very important when it comes to learning and being open to new ideas. It is also an important ingredient to becoming humble or teachable.

A closed-minded person can't accept or access things for what they are without great effort (whether the ideas are controversial or not). A closed-minded person has a fixed way of looking at things. A closed-minded person has difficulty embracing new ideas. A closed-minded person is closed minded because of fear, pride (thinking they know something) and judging (others as not knowing as well as they do). Closed-minded people are loyal to what they think they know. Closed-minded people think they know things… when in fact their intuition is more warped in general than others because of pride and judging. Closed-minded people go by what they think they know… whatever doesn't relate or tie into with what they think they know they can't absorb or build upon except with great effort. Closed-minded people are out to impress or out do others when it comes to opinions on contested or controversial topics. Closed-minded people have difficulty listening to others and absorbing what others say, because they are more interested in their own opinions or impressing others.

Open-minded people are able to take in a lot more information generally speaking than closed-minded people. Open-minded people are more able to see and acknowledge the truth if any in what others have to say than closed-minded people do. Open-minded people aren't into conspiracy theories or sniffing out the dirty laundry in the lives of people who don't fit in the "right" or "acceptable" boxes closed-minded people construct. Open-minded people don't look down on others nearly as often as closed-minded people do.

Open-minded people are generally more humble than closed-minded people are.

I have been a very stubborn, closed-minded, and proud individual most of my life. Thankfully God is making me teachable again. I needed pain and brokenness to question what I thought I knew… in order to grow again. I am still loyal to Jesus, but I don't only go by what I think I know anymore. "There is more in Heaven and earth than is dreamt of in my philosophy" to quote Shakespeare.

Dealing With Some Paranoia:

For a while my connectivity to God seemed frustrated and dry. But I persevered and continued to work through blocks that came my way. Then on July 23, 2010 I attempted to visualize Jesus again… and when I saw Him with the eyes from my heart immediately blackness and sinister darkness got laminated to the image of Jesus. I ask Jesus what was behind it at its source. The word: "Paranoia" came to mind. Could it be my paranoid schizophrenia, or the fear of committing a mortal sin? I thought about it but neither seemed right. While at work the next day it dawn on me what the unreasonable fear or paranoia was: the fear of me becoming homeless, destitute, unemployed, without hope,

and abandoned by all. As I got in touch with the fear I realized that it was based in the lie: "God won't look after me and my needs." As I felt the fear God removed it and my GIGANTIC insecurity shrunk to manageable proportions. Thank you Lord God for this break-through, and peace!

Insights On Growing In Grace & Love:

(A):

Unmerited favor as a definition for grace is best used to describe God's grace towards all humanity not the grace I want to give to others. The more I think grace is "unmerited" the less I am able to dispense grace to others. For me... Grace when I dispense it is defined as: "*caring* for anyone no matter what they have done or where they have been, or where they appear to be going". I know more than ever that I need to accept people where they are at like God does with me. I can't give what I have never received. I am learning from experience that the more my relationship with Jesus grows the more of a lover and dispenser of grace I will become. Anger is a normal emotion that everyone feels. I don't sin when I feel my anger even when I am in Church participating in a Mass. Sin only enters into the picture when I deal with my anger in unhealthy ways. The more I *care* for people the more I will forgive them if they do a wrong against me. The more I *care* for others the more I'll stomach it when they annoy me. So how do I *care* more and more for people? I do so by getting to know Jesus.

By "knowing Jesus" I mean to be in and grow in relationship with Jesus. Speaking to Him is not enough... I need to hear His voice... See His face with the eyes of my heart (which here on earth will generally be imperfect)... And absorb His love, truth, and affection in a way that changes my mind, heart, attitudes, sight, understanding, and conscience. Jesus wants to complete our natural loves with His supernatural loves. This is a process that is best begun by following Jesus to where He leads me (step after step) day after day not knowing where I am going in my spiritual journey. In following His word (not necessarily just what is written in the pages from the Bible) but to repent from roots that block and prevent love... And to renew one's mind by seeing the proper truth that uproots the lies I have believed[101].... The lies that blind us and put us in bondage to fears or pride that cause us to hate people out of anger (who are made in the image of God) and to be insensitive to them along with becoming addicted to feel-good "escapes" and to live out shallow and weak relationships with those we meet or hang out with.

(B):

I still jealously guarded against anyone else as being a vehicle of truth when it came to interpreting (mostly when it came to who will be saved) the Holy Bible. I was a faith and moral policeman wanting to correct those I felt were in error or those I judged to be miss-leading the simple or unaware. I did this in an ugly, guarded, fundamentalist, unkind (hard hearted), judgmental, abrasive, in-flexible, proud, and closed-minded manner. I had problems communicating with and listening to others when it came to opinions on interpreting the Bible. I did not see this ugliness in myself until Thursday August 5, 2010 when I was listening to a portion of a tape series from Fr. John Nisbet thanks to my wife Sophie. I told the Lord I was sorry and repented in faith and as a result the filth was washed out of me. "More is in earth and heaven than is dreamt of in my philosophy" to

[101] A good indication that we have come to believe a lie is when we disagree with what is written in the New Testament when it comes to faith and morals.

quote Shakespeare. Thank you Lord God for being gracious to me by forgiving, tolerating and loving me.

(C):

Jesus said: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." To sacrifice means to give something up... the Ten Commandments are sacrificial... and a stone can keep them... but having kept them does not mean we have loved... or embraced the spirit of the commandments... the prophets that came after Moses pointed to the wishes of God to do more than sacrifice... and to go further in showing compassion... to be kind... to be loving... to be merciful... to *care* for our fellow humans... to be gracious... to not harden our hearts... to keep our hearts soft... to bless... to give... to smile... to go the extra mile... to draw good from our hearts... to be good to people so that we all will eventually know our need for God, and our hunger for God.

(D):

The next thing the Holy Spirit made me aware of was that I needed to repent from my judgmental attitude towards many Protestant pastors... and I was made aware of it on Wednesday August 11, 2010 while reading the New Testament book of Hebrews chapters one and two from a Protestant Bible. The fact that it was a Protestant Bible made it possible for this insight to come to me and for me to repent from it and therefore to bear good fruit in this area.

(E):

Thanks to Roy and Maria (not their real names) a couple from our Church and discussions with Sophie... I have realized that I need to use a word with its true meaning and not throw some other meaning into it that will only confuse others! The new approach I am developing (with the help from others) will build new bridges in my thinking and make me gentler towards others and for that I am grateful. The definitions found in most lexicons for “goodness” use words like: “decency, integrity, honesty, righteous, and kindness”. I said in the past that if the motives were wrong in the attempt to do a good deed then the good deed isn't love even if it is good. This does contain a grain of truth in it... but is not the complete truth. Now I will re-word it into something better.

Here goes: When a good act is done with wrong motives it is outwardly good, but inwardly sour or defective. A good act is love when it is inwardly and outwardly good. Inwardly good acts are decent, show integrity, are honest, and have righteousness within them. The acts are fully righteous when God comes into the picture and lifts up the natural loves or natural goodness to a supernatural stature[102]... to make the acts fully good, fully decent, full of integrity, fully honest, fully righteous, and truly kind. If the person is knowingly not dependent on God through faith in doing a good act then... the act is inwardly sour and defective. People who reject God for being responsible for their ability to do good acts are self-righteous. Un-righteous people can do outwardly good acts. Righteous people often do many inwardly sour and defective good acts.

(F):

On August 11, 2010 I realized that I was still unkind or resentful to the Moslem people for 9/11 and my heart was hardened desiring retributive justice along with a desire for

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[102] This points to the need for each of us to eventually undergo the born from above process after the invitation is given us. Cf. John 3:5-8

complete conversion of Moslems from Islam to Jesus (I remember seeing people jumping up and down in the Middle East for joy when 9/11 happened). I felt no love for those people yet Jesus commands me to love my enemy. Then God expanded my heart with his grace... and I realized that deep inside of me I *cared* for the Moslem people and that softened my heart enough to care for them despite their aim, message and their history. I always wanted to love my enemy and now I do with Jesus Christ's movement in my journey. Truth sets us free to love, forgive, and to be gracious. The following quote: "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?",[103] solidified a gracious attitude in me towards those I knew I wanted to love (Moslem people) but was blocked from doing somehow for so long. That is one lesson!

The other lesson is that I realize I need to be open to Jesus out side of my Quite Times. If not then such a strategy only invites demons to cunningly suggest devious life choices so as to tempt me to walk away from Jesus. Just as the devil is regularly bombarding me with evil ideas God is attempting to direct me through communication (in many forms) to take the right path. If I ignore God I am blocking His voice and that leaves a vacuum. Nature hates vacuums hence my emptiness along with the world and the devil will fill the voids left by God if I ignore or block God's voice. So how do I fix this? I fix it by making it my goal to follow Jesus, abide in Jesus, rest in Jesus, and be open to His voice all the time so I can remain obedient and led by His voice into His will and so bear much good fruit like: love, respect, caring, forgiving, blessing, praying, and tolerating all people who pass my way. Love *cares* for all people no matter where they have been or what they have done, or where they are going: such is grace.

(G):

I have an imperfect imagination so when I imagine Jesus in my mind the image in my mind is going to be imperfect generally speaking.[104] God can and does communicate through imperfect images, and I don't have to get discouraged because I use my imagination in weak, imperfect, and blind ways at times. I don't have to be absolutely certain that what I hear is the truth. I am on a faith walk, I make mistakes and God is aware of this. If I risk stepping out in faith, God will honor it each time. Faith requires courage to step out and achieve.

Don't Ignore The Holy Spirit If You want To Love Supernaturally:

Principles and theories and rules are all fine and well… but they are not enough all by themselves. Truths that remove lies that block love are needed, but so is the Holy Spirit. Saint Augustine taught that the love between God the Father and God the Son was so rich, powerful, pure and righteous that it was the third person of the Holy Trinity: God the Holy Spirit. So if the love between the trinity is the Holy Spirit… ought it not be the same between and for us mere human beings?

Anyone who wants to supernaturally love must not neglect the Holy Spirit: the third person of the Holy Trinity. He who welcomes the Holy Spirit welcomes supernatural love. Jesus is the True Vine, and what flows through His branches to those persons who abide in Him is not just only life giving power. Rather it is a person, namely the Holy Spirit; that inexhaustible source of power and insight to love, ever gentle, at peace, full of good counsel, and generous in grace; who is also an approachable person, ever near and

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[103] Found in Philip Yancey's book called: "What's So Amazing About Grace?" on p. 130

[104] Cf. First Corinthians 13:12

present, and joyfully alive; a loving person who guides us into bearing the good fruit promised to those who follow Jesus. The good fruit being love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.
There is no formula or recipe that we can use to entice the Holy Spirit to make us supernatural lovers. He comes and goes where He pleases. He wants into our lives though and the following prayer is a beginning each and every day:

O Holy Spirit, beloved of my soul, I adore You.
Enlighten me, guide me, strengthen me, console me.
Tell me what I should do; give me Your orders.
I promise to submit myself to all that You desire of me
and to accept all that You permit to happen to me.
Let me only know Your Will.

That when prayed in faith each day will be answered as we follow Jesus.
After I began to invite the Holy Spirit into my life each morning and repeatedly during each day (i.e. no longer ignoring Him) I found strength to love more deeply and be less selfish; the Holy Spirit also drove out a lot of the fear I felt in driving my car (after not driving for more than 17-years); the holy Spirit also started to bring counsels that when followed calms me down and brings the peace that transcends human understanding.
Thank you Father God for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and also for the gift of your beloved Son: Jesus Christ! I am truly grateful. Amen, and Amen!

Moving To Healthy And Humble Attitudes In Every Day Business:

When one does something wrong against another person there are at least five different attitudes one can have. They are:

1. Don't give a shit.
2. Pride: When one cares more about what others think about one-self and doesn't have any concern for the one, one has hurt.
3. Pride and guilt: When one cares more about what others think about oneself. Yet at the same time feeling guilty because one does not feel genuine concern.
4. Fear of being rejected or ridiculed or losing out on something; or
5. Genuine concern and sadness for having hurt another person.

The healthiest reaction or attitude is (5). Up until Thursday September 16, 2010 I mostly felt (3) and (4). But now thankfully I feel (5). Thank you Lord Jesus!

Dealing With Pettiness:

For some time, I have been growing in the awareness that God is not petty. By this I mean I used think that if I did this or that small wrong thing, then God would do whatever it takes to teach me a lesson in the matter or put me in my place with the mentality of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. In other words, I thought that God had it in for me whenever I did a small thing wrong, and really had it in for me if I did a BIG thing wrong. Such thinking does not realize God's mercy, grace, compassion, and gentleness towards us. Now having this revelation through the Holy Spirit I was able to see God in a better light. Later on though, the Holy Spirit began to reveal to me that I was petty in my own way. He showed me that I was in the habit of taking great offense at

people who did me small wrongs, or annoyed me in small matters, or intruded in my life in unwanted ways. By revealing this attitude to me the Holy Spirit was saying that I needed to repent from this attitude with His help. Real change comes gradually not immediately. I can't be a one man wrecking crew. I need the Holy Spirit's counsels, guidance, understanding, leadership, and power to uproot the blocks to love in my life in this area (my pettiness) along with whatever else will come up.

Renewing The Mind (Culminating on Thursday, September 30, 2010):

Feeling a certain way when the Bible says things are not that way shouldn't always nullify our feelings completely. God (who is love) can or may allow things to happen to us that our parents would never dream of. Does that mean He doesn't care? No! But we may feel like He doesn't care (because of what we experience) and those feelings are valid, and shouldn't diminish what our faith in Him says. We are allowed to tell Him how we feel as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

To deny how we feel is to deny part of our reality. God gave us feelings after all. Having said this we have to realize that our feelings ought not negate our faiths or eradicate them if our faiths are true.

Recently I felt very broken as I went through some intense suffering. I felt that God was not doing enough to help me navigate through it… so I told Him so… I reluctantly got angry with God (i.e. I discovered my anger towards Him)… and verbalized what I felt was so un-fair on His part… yet in doing this I immediately found the strength to stand up for what I believed in, and became able and willing to dialogue with a very close person on two topics that were controversial and needing discussion. I felt reluctant to engage in the dialogue with this person because I did not want to come across as judgmental, un-caring, religious, or too moralistic. When we had the conversation and I learned the true views of the person I needed to talk with… God was allowed to put His finger on stuff (bad attitudes) within my heart that needed to go. Like left over hatred, anger, intolerance, hard-heartedness, fear, and needing those close to me to agree with me because of my insecurities. So with God allowing me (1) to be broken to the point of anger (on my part) led to (2) me finding courage to speak what I truly believed which led to (3) me discovering sinful attitudes in my heart that I eventually was led to (4) repent from with the Holy Spirit's help. Point is: God does use all things for our good if we let Him. I thought I was going backwards yet I was moving forwards. Thank you Lord God for pushing me to the point where I became courageous to the point that it ignited life and fire within me again.

On Dealing With 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. 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 too intense anger 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.

Loving Those Whom We Disagree With:

Agreeing on truth is often seen as necessary for unity, security, sister or bother-hood, warmth, friendship, closeness, commitment or intimacy. Looking back at Church history the call to agreeing on truth has brought more division, animosity, hostility, judging, slander, and hatred than anyone could have wanted. Truth is important, but winning arguments, and being right can hurt, and make us aggressive and abrasive towards each other. Things can get ugly. When we encounter disagreements on important issues the most important question we are confronted with is: "Are we going to accept, love, bless, and be at peace with those we disagree with?". This is an important question that will arise often if one is open to listening to others. Saying yes to love each time is the key to sanity, peace, hope, and compassion. It is saying yes to friendship, closeness, commitment and intimacy. This is a truth that I needed to learn and has brought clarity of mind, hope, and joy to my life. Why? Because it was far too easy in the past for me to vilify, demonize, judge, and hate those who had different opinions than I had. Why? Because as a small child I wanted acceptance so much that I'd hurt others to get it; and I would justify my actions and judging with lies, pretending to be better than others all motivated through my pride. This judging grew more and more as it took root in my life. As God slowly makes me aware of it comments made by others about me in the past actually begin to make sense. The way I see things is still slowly changing for the better thanks to God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Amen!

A Memory Healed & Burden Removed:

I know that for a very long time I did not want to live. I wasn't suicidal, but I longed to die and go to Heaven because life seemed so burdensome to me. I know that in my teens (I don't know the exact date) I was watching a boxing match on TV with my Dad and I did not like the fact that the weaker boxer was losing badly. I at some time during the match decided to give some of my strength to the weaker boxer hoping that would stem the tide and give him a chance to win or make a fight of the match. I also think I tried to carry his weakness… and so a burden formed within me that I carried with me until now. In prayer on Sunday, October 24, 2010 I gave that burden to the Lord. Now that memory doesn't bother me anymore, and I feel free from it, feeling lighter and younger. I think that this is the reason why I have avoided, fled, and distanced myself from encountering situations, films, shows, books, and people's hurt or trauma because I didn't want to carry anymore burdens than I already had, having carried the above burden most of my life. When one sees good fruit then one knows that God has done a miracle. Thank you Lord Jesus for this miracle! Amen and Amen!

Looking For Dirty Laundry?

For so much of my life I have been cynical and judgmental (because of my pride) even though I now see it and have repented from much of its wreckage and roots in my mind and heart. However, the attitudes I wake up with still for me is to seek the dirty laundry in other people's lives and for me to be selfish. How long will these be my cross or my burdens to carry? I don't know. I know God has promised me freedom to love… and I have walked with Him now for nearly 19 years carrying the promise of freedom… and freedom to love has not come immediately but gradually. I still have not arrived. Sometimes I have taken one step forward and then ten backwards. At this time,

November 8, 2010 my mornings are still the most difficult parts of each day because of the burdens I carry. But as each day progresses I begin to find victory later in each day with the help of the Trinity through relationship, prayer, faith, and perseverance. I just wish I did not have fight the battles over each and every morning. Yet Jesus instructed His disciples that they could not have any part of Him without picking up their crosses and following Him. This consoles me.

More Progress:

Today on Tuesday November 9, 2010 in the morning I did not start out having any struggles with selfishness or embracing spiritual racism. I was able to see the humanity of those with different faith traditions, not judge them, and not get wacked (psychotic) in the head unable to love them. The key for me is to see that we all have dirty laundry, them no different than I. I am not more Righteous than anyone else: we are all sinners. This is pivotal for somebody who is called to care for, love, and introduce others to Jesus. Without this I have no message. Thank you Holy Trinity for giving me a meaningful message!

However, I did fall into judging one person today but God pointed it out to me not long afterwards and I repented with His help. Boy is it easy for me to fall into and judge and not see what I am doing. This points to the fact that I need spiritual Light. Who is this light? Jesus! I need Jesus to expose things for me so that He can guide me into His paths of Righteousness. Without Him I am lost and in darkness. Thankfully He cares for us: me not the least.

Another Insight:

I have often wrongly ruled out other people's ideas of love thinking that they are too superficial. We Christian's don't have a monopoly on love. It is true that often what the world calls love is just using each other. But certain sects within Christianity have often directed hatred and judgment against certain people groups in the name of defending the truth and the family but have done so with hatred not love or grace. I know I have done so often.

As I continue to walk out of the darkness I am learning new things with God's help. I am dealing with situations more in the present than in the past, but be it ever gradual, gradual, and still gradually. Thank you Lord God for your patience with me. I'm your child eager to learn and grow in your instruction. Amen, and Amen!

Feelings & anger

Admitting I am angry and feeling that anger and expressing that anger in prayer to God has not been easy for me. In fact I have attempted to ignore or suppress my anger most of my life. I have wanted to or been inclined to mistakenly label my anger as judgment. I am inclined to think I need to repent from my supposed judgments before they are judgments… when they are still non-existent with there only being anger to deal with. Surprisingly when I do judge I am unaware of it at the time and unaware that the sun has gone down on my judgments a few moments later. I guess that this situation will take time to correct and so I need to practice patience and trust God with the process of restoration.

When I feel my red-hot anger all sorts of uncharitable ideas enter into my mind... some of the Psalmist's prayers are like that too.[105] Confessing to God in prayer my feelings of

[105] Cf. Psalm 31(v.6), 119(v.113), 137(v.9)

rage and anger towards people is important. I need to aim for honesty in my prayer life. This doesn't mean I have become an accuser of the brethren (because motives count).
If I have rage and hatred, and feel like taking revenge then I need to tell God about it. Not to get God to agree with me and help me to take revenge, but to wash the darkness out of me. But if I go to God in rage in an attempt to use Him to get even with an agent who hurt me then I have become an accuser of the brethren. This is unacceptable.
Making my feelings known to God also makes them known to me. Not that I'll act out those desires to hurt others. But God can't clean me up without me being honest about my feelings (or attitudes) and the shit in my life. When I confess to God honestly all the ugly stuff then I am inviting God into those parts of my life. He then invites me to process my anger in healthy ways and only good things can happen as a result. When I confess my feelings to God, Jesus exposes them to me for what they are and if I am willing He will lead me to deal with that anger in healthy ways through prayer. But if I suppress my anger then I can't deal with it, and it turns to bitterness, cynicism, scoffing, hardened-heart, insensitivity and addictions (and possibly also falling into compulsively judging everyone who crosses my path).
After I have dealt with my judgments against an agent who hurt me… there is one more person I may need to deal with: myself. Sometimes I can blame myself for the injustices visited on me. When I deal rightly with my anger in prayer to God against all agents of injustice in my life, and I deal rightly with my anger against myself in prayer then the storms will have blown themselves out. The process is a learning curve!

Conversing With God In The Mind And Heart Again:

On the way to Harrison Hot Springs (On Friday November 19, 2010) to a marriage retreat with Sophie, I attempted to speak with God about my insensitivity, but I experienced a wall so I gave up trying at that time. Later when we got to the Hotel and got comfortable I attempted to converse with Jesus again but this time I was shown my approach in Listening Prayer. I saw it for what it was: it was weak, pressurized, rigid, stretched, and desperately attempting to make something happen by posturing myself before God in a way that was not natural not trusting and not at peace. It focused more on worrying about which principles to use. It also focused on my inadequacy, and my intellectual doubts instead of on the goodness of God. It focused on techniques and was based on the fear of error. It attempted to put God into a box, not giving Him room to express Himself to me, as He desired in the fullest possible ways. I also was too rushed and anxious. I expected God to answer me immediately. Being at peace is the best way to hear God's voice. Words that produce anxiety are a sure signs that those words are not from God. If we don't calm ourselves down as best we can the harder it will be to perceive reality and to be certain about what God is saying to us in Listening Prayer.
Now God did speak with me in my mind and heart for sometime despite my weak manner of going about it because I was so desperate and so in need, but ultimately He had something better for me. He wanted me to slow down, enjoy life, and savor all the good things life has to offer.
I now know that my weak approach needed to be discarded and that God was waiting for me to get the revelation that such was needed. God wants for me to approach Him in simplicity with childlike faith where He, His care for me, His nearness, and His goodness are the focus. What a difference it makes.

I did miss the words of knowledge, the images, and the direction I got in the past from the Holy Trinity wondering for sometime why I was experiencing the block to such communication and not knowing what to do about it. But now the above blocks have been exposed to my mind and heart and I have a new start.
Even though I could not contact God in my head for sometime because of my blocks, God did speak with me in other ways like He used to do before I got Brad Jersak's book: "Can You Hear Me?". Jesus' sheep know His voice. I am one of His many sheep. So I too can hear His voice. Those who come to God must believe that He is good and that He rewards those who approach Him.
I am sure that blocks will come every now and then but will also be dealt with as God and I continue to walk together. Thank you Lord God for not giving up on me. For you all things are possible. Thank you for loving all of us! Amen, and Amen!

God's Word Lights The Way To God:

Going by our selves to God just because it seems good can be tricky. I know that I have approached God without His promises in mind and I know from experience that it makes it nearly impossible to have confident expectations, joy, and peace in His presence. I am learning that when Jesus says:

'Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.'[106]

I can take Him at His words. Taking this promise with me in prayer helps me to confidently be heard and expect that He will grant me insight, wisdom, and peace when I speak and listen to Him.
I am not always aware of the wrong-ness behind my judgments while making them because of my schizophrenia. I can and do (at this time) make such judgments often that I quickly forget about and do not realize that the sun goes down on them. When this happens I usually realize that my attitudes towards others have also been affected in very negative ways. Such judgments (against myself or others) are like spiritual weeds. They need to be plucked out by the roots, but how do we do this? We do so by asking God to reveal them to us when He is ready to do so. Sometimes He does so immediately, other times He does so later on. I ought not put God into a box expecting Him to immediately answer me through interior images, dreams, or visions. I ought not put God in a box expecting Him to not answer immediately. I want to give God the freedom to act when He knows it is best. And He always knows best, even when I am angry with Him. If it is urgent in God's eyes then He will communicate with me soon. If it fits into His timetable some time later on, then He will expect me to wait as patiently as possible for his answer. But know this: God loves to speak and to be heard. With me… using words or thoughts back and forth with God is the best way I communicate with Him. And when it suits God He uses interior images, dreams or visions with me. He decides when where and what to use in communication with me. Thoughts or words work best for me. This takes off the pressure, lack of focus, and removes the distractions I felt in the past when I expected immediate interior pictures, images, or visions from God in prayer.

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[106] Matthew 11:28-30 NRSV

God has given each of us a conscience where His light shines revealing to us the path He intends us to take. Consciences either warn before we do something wrong, or they tell us we did something right or wrong. God does not want to replace this setup through Listening Prayer completely. If our minds or consciences are so blocked or warped then Listening Prayer is the obvious path to take: I have been there and needed it for some time because of my schizophrenia. If the mind is clear, and the conscience is functioning well then God will use it over Listening Prayer. That doesn't mean that we ought to discard Listening Prayer altogether. Prayer and Listening are important aids to getting clean hearts and minds not to mention they enable us to have a real relationship with God. Always God uses our consciences together with Listening Prayer when we are open to it.

Dealing With Difficult Memories:

Today on Sunday, November 28, 2010 Sophie and I had decided to put unnecessary belongs into a storage facility nearby. As a result I decided to go through all the paper work (letters, receipts, warranties, financially depressing documents…etc.) I had accumulated since my early university years. As I worked through the stuff I began to remember and experience the pain, worries, sadness, doubts, anger, covetousness, insecurities, and resentments associated with those years. I knew I needed to take this baggage to Jesus. But at the same time I realized that much of the negativity I still carried within me was directed against God. How do you forgive a Perfect God?

Well God may be perfect but I often don't see or experience Him that way (hence the need for faith). My faith says He is good even though I don't always see it (in the past especially in those years of devastating darkness and pain). The darkness I experienced I believe God meant for good. So today I decided to take my pain from those years that I still carried within me to God in prayer. To my surprise and delight He removed all those painful burdens from me. I feel lighter and more joyful as a result. Thank you ever so much living God.

I also needed to deal with my image of God the Father in my mind. If anyone gets bad press it is Him. We know all about Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Jesus suffered for us and the Holy Spirit is intimately involved in our lives; the Father seems distant, hard to please, and invisible. But here is the kicker: God the Father sent Jesus to reconcile us to Himself, and He send the Holy Spirit to be with us to comfort and direct us. Only a good Father would do such a thing. Even more Jesus is the image of the Father, and the Holy Spirit is the supernatural love of Jesus and the Father personified. Both Jesus and the Holy Spirit come from the Father and reflect His beauty. So if they are beautiful so must the Father be beautiful. I am at peace.

Whose Conscience Is It?

I don't know how God judges people's consciences, actions, aims, directions, inactions, beliefs, knowledge, and baggage. I am learning that what is obvious to me is not always obvious to others. All people have different histories, injuries, hurts, blind-nesses, and lies deposited in their minds and hearts and how they use what they have to navigate through life I have no idea. The only person I know anything real about is myself. I know that I have been a very judgmental person for a very long time… and the words Jesus spoke about not judging and condemning others apply to me. Recognizing these insights restore sanity to me.

More Chaos???

Today on Tuesday, November 30, 2010 as I began my day at work I had some turmoil in my mind and instead of attempting to tackle it with the tools I have acquired over the years of dealing with my schizophrenia, psychosis, and shit in my head and heart. I decided to wait on the Lord because the verse: "Blessed are those who wait on the Lord" came to mind. I decided to wait and I was granted some peace regarding the shit in my head.

But then as coworkers made their ways into work things began to escalate again. I became more and more irritated and intolerant of little things as the morning progressed. I felt so out of control as I got angrier for every little thing that was not in its place, and with everyone who got in my way. I felt so absolutely selfish. I felt devoid of love, devoid of sanity and my peace was all gone. It got so bad that my annoyance began to turn into anger and the anger became more and more directed at God. The anger built, and grew along with the psychosis and I felt like it was open season on me. I felt worthless, sinful, selfish, ugly, and hateful. Who would save me from this mess? I began to question how much longer I'd have to suffer with schizophrenia and all the rubbish that comes along with it: "20 more years?" I asked myself. I answered: "No…" that was unacceptable in my opinion [But I know that I want God's will done in my life… and if He wants it then that is something I will accept one day at a time]. I felt abandoned by God and began to question His motives for letting this happen to me. I began to question God's wisdom for letting me go through what I saw as totally outrageous, and unfair treatment. I felt like I didn't know myself any longer. I asked if all the victories I had experienced were worthless.

Why was this happening to me? I pouted and felt sorry for myself. Was it because I was wrongly aiming at perfection? I thought this was a real possibility. Were my beliefs really that outrageous? Did they need to change? As this turmoil raged through me I worked at my job and got one thing after another accomplished. Hour after hour went by with no end or rest in sight as far as the inner suffering and turmoil was concerned.

But then I finally asked myself: Are the demons responsible for this? When I asked this question the psychosis immediately ended. The demon was sniffed out. I still felt rattled and it would take a week or two to get back to normal. I still felt confused. But mostly I felt relieved that the chaos seemed to be over with.

I asked myself: What lessons could I garnish from this experience? I realized that the demons want my soul, and this major attack I experienced was an attempt to destroy my faith in the God who has promised me great things. I also realized that the words: "Blessed are those who wait on the Lord" were from God to me to endure what I had just gone through. I also realized that what I intensely experienced for six to seven hours others experienced to a lesser intensity but over many more years (which is no less easier than what I experienced today). All are targets for destruction by demons who wish to lead us away from the living God, away from healing, rest, peace, hope, and great expectations.

I have been told that when a giraffe is born it falls to the ground from its mother's womb, and after it finally learns to get to its feet, its mother knocks it to the ground to make sure that the baby giraffe doesn't forget how to get up. Is this a lesson that God wants me to learn? Maybe!

The last part of my recovery from this attack is this: I have learned the hard way that I can't get a clean heart from God by abrasively demanding it in anger from Him while

doubting and questioning His goodness. Imagine the gall I had to demand holiness in an unholy manner. Who would be so deluded? It was in part because of my schizophrenia… but also because a part of me thought it was okay! Lord God please continue to show me mercy in Jesus' name. Getting out of the webs we get caught in takes time, patience, perseverance, and repenting with God's help. Be sure... Satan comes to steal, kill, and destroy. So I know that I need to be on my guard. Amen, and Amen!

Coming Full Circle:

On May 1, 2001 I was given the gift of chastity. From that time forward I was able to confront others on any matter between them and me without the fear I felt in the past. I now realize that this state was not normal (and probably psychotic) although I thought it was acceptable for some time.

Part of coming full circle has to do with the reasons and answers to the question: Do we confront all those who are still alive and who have hurt us at some point during our lives? I initially though that the answer to this question was always yes but I now know it to be otherwise. If one knows that the person who hurt oneself feels contrition, remorse, and sadness for what he or she did to us then the answer is yes, and one may contact them and tell them they are forgiven. They will feel relieved.

I don't recommend contacting all the persons who have wronged one to let them know one has forgiven them. Many times when other hurt us they may never have intended to hurt us. We can hurt their feelings in such cases, and they may see our desire for an apology as us judging them. When they feel judged they will feel hurt and violated, and may start to nurse their anger into a full-blown resentment. With us pointing out possible dirty laundry belonging to them, they might start looking for dirty laundry in our lives. We may start a war with them and that would go on and on against love, blessing, and peace. And if they don't think they did anything wrong we might have a real difficulty to forgive them from our hearts knowing they are un-repentant.[107] When we forgive somebody we ought not go about saying that we have done so revealing their identity and all the details of their transgression(s). Love covers a multitude of sins!

If we need to encourage somebody else to forgive by sharing how we forgave then we need to keep the names anonymous and places unknowable. God says that when He forgives us our wrongs they are as far as the east is from the west. If we want God to not use our sins against us then we have to be willing to do the same with those who sinned against us.[108]

In this new phase of recovery I am much more in touch with reality. Thank you Lord God for the newly found sensitivity I now have towards others – and the freedom that belongs to it! Thank you Sophie for your part in the whole matter! I seem to have come full circle since 2001. I am so grateful for the restoration of this truth to my conscience and practice. Peace! Come Lord Jesus, come!

An Insight Into My Insensitive People Pleasing Side:

Having to be liked was a major flaw in my makeup for a long time... I did not know how much it was still at work within me until Tuesday, December 14, 2010 when the Holy Spirit put it's finger on it within me. When He did I was able to repent from it with Jesus'

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[107] I am indebt to my wife Sophie and R.T. Kendall for making these ideas known to me and showing me that they are worth practicing.

[108] Indebt to R.T. Kendall for this reasoning

help! It was one hell of a learning curve.
To accept a person means you are willing to live or work or play with them despite their messages or attitudes or actions. You might hate their messages, you might not like their attitudes or behaviors but you refuse to judge the person (judging the message or attitude or action is not the same as judging the person). When we accept a person we remain committed to loving them and meeting them where they are at, and not demanding that they conform to what we want.
Needing each person we meet to like us is un-natural. When one is liked not out of manipulation, but as result of people getting to know one then it is welcome. Needing to be liked will warp our thoughts/words and actions towards others because we put being liked before the good of the other person and even ourselves. Sometimes we will have to do something another person won't like but it may be the very medicine that they need. If we need to be liked then chances are pretty good that we won't do what is right in those situations.
When we set our hearts on being accepted by others, then there are some possible consequences or fruits. Usually when one sets one's heart too much on being accepted rejection will eventually occur. From then on the spirit of perfection-ism will grow within the rejected person. Because he or she might think that if only one will become perfect then others will accept one. Because of the effort and aim in becoming perfect… a judgmental attitude will grow out of the perfectionism. Because if one has to be perfect then one will expect it from others too: hence the judgmental-ism. On one hand one will desire acceptance, but the judgmental-ism will make it more and more difficult to make and maintain warm, loving and intimate relationships. A proud reaction to being rejected will fuel more rejection. Some things are counter-intuitive. It is amazing how one can know a truth but drift away from it because of the passion or heated anger in the moment. The desire to make judgments is overwhelming in the proud. Often the very things we set out to get are never attained because of the methods we choose to get those things. People who are rejected also attempt to please others so they may get acceptance. But because they are judgmental they become insensitive people pleasers. The communities they belong to for their part are often jaded as far as their part is concerned. I have been there and done that most of my life… but no more thanks to God!
The gravest possible sins for someone who wants to belong too much that others can do to them are either "they rejected me"... or when others aren't "nice" to me in the way I want to be treated. And they often demand that others greet them first... otherwise they may get resentful and pout... or they feel un-liked or rejected.
They will take every action that challenges their charity or good will... as a great weight or an inconvenience. They will feel guilty if they don't people please the person challenging their charity; otherwise if they please the person who challenges their charity they probably land up feeling used (as if their rights are trampled on). If they are conscientious they will be caught between their selfishness and the desire to please. They are the insensitive people pleasers. They want to do the right thing but they want acceptance and belonging more than anything else subconsciously if not fully consciously. This has been at work within me subconsciously for so many years and happens to be finally dead thanks to God. It grew in my consciousness as it was brought back from out of my subconscious threatening all the good I believed in until God struck it down and I had more freedom.

Somehow because I wanted so badly to be liked (even though I became judgmental out of the rejection I experienced) I thought I had to always like and be nice to those whom I wanted relationships with. I also thought I needed to like those closest to me no matter what. Those who are closest to us often annoy us, anger us, and frustrate us the most. I now realize that I do accept and love those closest to me but I don't have to always like them or what they do. This has brought more peace to me. It amazes me how one small decision can lead to a string of consequences that a person never dreamt would come about. Such is the case in my life. The young make mistakes whereas the old learn from them. Thank you Lord Jesus for your patience, love, discipline, and peace! I am most grateful.

Flotsam & Jetsam:

I know that while I grew up as a child and on into my teenage years, my twenties… and later years I was to the best of my memory unaware of the consequences that came about because of my morally evil decisions. Looking back I wish now that the consequences that came about had been felt more deeply by me so as to make me realize what I was doing and therefore to spur me on sooner to repentance and away from the path to the dark side. But now, since about mid 2004 every little evil judgment has had consequences that have made me immediately want to go back and repent from them because they lead away from love. By judgments I mean those made out of pride that harden one's heart towards the people one hears about or meets. What is this teaching me?

God is love not hatred. God hates no one. The further I walk with God/Jesus the more I realize that He doesn't harden His heart against anyone: the wicked who generally do evil; and the good who generally do good; and those in between. I am learning that I am not allowed to turn my anger into hatred so as to harden my heart or attitudes against those who do differ to me in thoughts and deeds when it comes to moral matters. I tend to believe that God gives all people their hearts' desires. So I need to be aware of what I am aiming for. If the desires we have are evil then unwanted suffering will result because we were made for peace, joy, and clean consciences; deviating from seeking good makes us sick; and when we are sick we don't feel good. If the desires we have are good, then suffering occurs too, but it is a good kind of suffering. Why? Because to achieve acts of love, we humans require the ability to suffer, and because we do love that ability is used - hence the pain or suffering we experience.

Even though God visits on those in Hell the consequences of their actions, the consequences are in line with their desires. God is not some despotic power monger who delights in the suffering of those He has made because they reject Him. When someone rejects God that rejection hurts one so much that they see it as God's retribution.

Connecting & Trusting God In A New Way:

Almost universally in my past when I was navigating through turmoil, challenges, confusion, un-rest, trials, stressful temptations, moral failures, or negotiating and compromising on meeting needs, desires, goals, methods, and outcomes in my relationships I'd pray, but feel distant and un-consoled by God unable to connect with Him in a strong way. I'd therefore not feel any real peace through those tests. I'd trust Him as much as I could… but not fully. The only time I felt consolation when I felt it was in between my trials. In my past I'd universally not be able to rest, or even communicate with, or wholly trust God with the burdens that really challenged me or storms that loomed so large ahead… because my apprehensions, fear and dread were overwhelming.

Sadly the storms I went through looked larger than my God in practice. My faith was weak; even though I did trust God with my Salvation… and even though I trusted Him with ordinary day-to-day stuff, unfortunately with the more difficult challenges I had trouble trusting in God that much at all. I'd ask others to pray for my causes and also for me… but me wholly turning to God in trust and rest for BIG things was not possible for the longest time.

Yes I did go through plenty of storms for many years (because of my schizophrenia or Dark Night) with great temptations, moral failures, doubts, and trials… and I made it through them in faith (weak as it was) with God's help, mercy, forgiveness and grace. But I never did so in much peace or confidence or consolation. I never really felt connected with God while going through them. I never really felt I could trust God completely with the heavy issues.

Those with little faith can only trust God with small stuff; those with more faith can trust God with weightier stuff; and God loves them both the same. Those with faith in the true Jesus are sisters and brothers with one Father. God loves those with little faith just as much as those with great faith. God will do all in His power to save each of us. Getting from little faith to greater faith requires relationship based on some faith and trials that exercise the faith that we do have. Like Saint John of the Cross said:

To come to enjoy what you have not
you must go by a way in which you enjoy not.
To come to the knowledge you have not
you must go by a way in which you know not.
To come to the possession you have not
you must go by a way in which you possess not.
To come to what you are not
you must go by a way in which you are not.[109]

But finally because of recent challenges… for the first time I was able to connect with and trust God with BIG stuff despite the confusion, anxiety, doubt, and uncertainty I was feeling inside of me. The storm I was going through became small and my God became BIG in my eyes. I had no way of knowing that this was possible in my relationship with God until Thursday, December 30, 2010. But now I know it is. Thank you Lord Jesus, Father God, and beloved Holy Spirit for this new development in my relationship with you. I am in your debt (and always will be). Thank you for the challenges you have brought my way that have with your help brought me to where I am now walking deeper in faith, consolation, and peace.

Perfection Versus Maturity:

Well then Lord God I have come to the conclusion today (Monday, January 3, 2011) that I will until I die have venial sins in my life. Aiming for absolute perfection is not wise or possible. Aiming to be mature is important. But maturity is not always perfection… maturity is able to accept and admit that I am wrong when I am wrong… and to correct my mistakes when and where possible. Correcting them is not always easy or possible.

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[109] K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works Of St. John Of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), p. 111, or from the Sketch of Mount Carmel

Wanting to be perfect more than caring for others is not where things are at in the true spiritual life. Aiming to be holy is a good thing but doing it too much will suffocate the Holy Spirit's presence, and block the fruit of the Spirit. The truly humble will accept that there will always be minor sins in one's life when the majors ones have been done away with. Focusing on not sinning is not the same as focusing on those we are called to love. Focusing on sin is focusing on self. Self needs to be forgotten.

Dealing With Paranoia:

It is God's love that leads us to repentance: not a harsh whip, dark threats, paranoia, or unreasonable fears. I must not forget God's love: He is not a slave driver: He is not difficult to please. I need to stay away from right wing conservatism and left wing liberalism. I need to stay away from extremes. Getting to know Jesus by reading the Four Gospels regularly and absorbing its light and love is where it is at. I need to focus on mercy not sacrifice; and love not fear or paranoia. It is simple faith in God or Jesus that grants us God's promises; not keeping rules. I need to focus on Jesus' gentle love for me. When I am in touch with Jesus' love I will have joy, peace, and hope; and I will express that devotion in songs of praise and meaningful worship. I will celebrate His love; not being in dread of breaking rules. Yes there is a Hell. But Jesus did not go around threatening or have the mentality of focusing on: "if you don't keep this or that commandment then you are going to Hell." He did say that those who neglect to keep the lesser of the greater commandments and teach others to do likewise will be considered least in His Kingdom.[110] Jesus shows us love, meekness (i.e. He is slow to anger), shows us mercy, grace, love, and light because that is who He is and that is the best way to get frightened or confused sheep on the right path and into His Kingdom of joy, laughter, peace, and holiness. Real change is inspired not demanded. Jesus meets us where we are at and doesn't force us to follow Him. Yes fear can be a good thing… and sometimes the Holy Spirit screams in our conscience.

If someone has suffered a lot they will very well have difficulty in seeing God as love, especially if they see God as the one instigating that suffering to bring about discipline. If one has paranoid schizophrenia then that may be part of the battle to maintaining a wholesome image of God before them. Both of these cases have been my lot. Getting in touch with God as love is the only way to rid oneself of unreasonable fears, paranoia, or the lie that God is a cosmic GIANT or BULLY who will punish at the slightest deviation of good conduct.

Problems Are Opportunities:

In the past whenever I was encountering a problem or a challenge I would think to my self that when I solved the current problem then things would get easier. But it never worked out that way. The reward of having solved a problem is getting a new problem.

Unexpected Escalation Of Evil Thoughts Implanted In My Mind:

For a few weeks now since around the beginning of the 2011 I have been under repeated attacks from demons lying to me in my mind attempting to make me think their thoughts are mine. The activity I experienced just exploded into my life bringing confusion, and doubt that helped me to make bad decisions and hurt those I loved. Because of this activity I have decided to re-read one of the first books on spiritual warfare that I came across after my Dark Journey began. The book is called: "The Bondage Breaker" written

[110] Cf. Matthew 5:19

by Neil T. Anderson. Like all of us his theology is not 100% correct, but I am humble enough to listen and learn from him when he speaks the meaningful truth. I am also using much of what I learned from Brad Jersak's book called: "Can You Hear Me?"
There have been times when the attacks were so overwhelming I became confused as to what voice belonged to Jesus. These dark periods lasted days and so I wrongly confessed out loud during those times that I could no longer hear God's voice. When I repented from confessing this I began to have confidence in discerning the voice of God again. I guess that what I confess with my mouth can limit my ability to live victoriously in the world I am apart of.
The voices that don't belong to God have been trying to deceive me into thinking that God does not care, that He is distant, that He isn't just, that He is with holding stuff I deserve, and that I know better how things ought to work than God does. These voices are very seductive and it takes real effort to see them for what they are: lies. Why do the demons do this? They want me to think that I can run my life all by myself, independent of others (especially God, His Word, and His Church) and that I can be good without God. They want to push me away from the foundation that I need to be forgiven by God for my evil deeds that Jesus died for. They want me to believe that I am a god (or will be one some day). When one thinks one is a god, one is a slave to the dark lord Satan himself because we are slaves to the one whose lies we believe. Seeing all of this puts power, peace, and fight into me. I feel like my worldview is being put on its right footing yet again. I feel like I have found part of the puzzle that was missing and that gives me courage to tackle what comes my way, and courage to stand up for what I believe. Thank you Lord Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen!

Dealing With My Insecurity:

Fear of the unknown together with being an insecure person for such long a time has driven me with the help of demons into places that made me feel weak and battered to the point questioning God's love and will for those I love and also for myself. I now realize that when I recall the things God has done for me and what is recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessing them in the face of the lies that the demons throw at me (in my thought life), I get grounded in truth, feel less insecure, and experience less fear. When I believe God's teaching and message on who I am, His love for me, His plan for my life, and the truth about man's pride (including my own) I find that strength enters into me along with joy, courage, self-esteem, and confidence. My workload no longer seems gigantic, and the pressures of day-to-day life I handle better with a clearer mind.

What Is My Confession?

I find myself lately being tempted to see God in a poor light when I see myself reverting back to sins I thought I'd overcome with God's help. The thoughts that enter my mind sound just and fair but are sinister and from the pit of Hell. Basically they say: "See, you have served God for more than twenty years now and you still suck when it comes to love. God has not come through for you. Give it up, God hasn't and won't fulfill His promises to you. You are like the proverbial donkey with the carrot ahead of it tied to a stick with a string. You won't find consolation in God." This sounds so plausible if it weren't that I'm committed to following Jesus… if He can't come through for me then no one else can. I know that there are BIG changes in my heart and my attitudes… and even though change is gradual, gradual, and gradual; I'll hold onto Jesus' promises.
When I see sin in my life I can either go with the sinister voice mentioned above and stay

angry or I can confess my sins to God. When I confess my sins to God then His life, peace, patience, and healing enter into me. Confession isn't just saying I'm wrong, it is saying, "God I sinned in such a way. I was wrong to do so, please forgive me and help me to turn over a new leaf; I repent with your help. Amen!"

Yes God Is A Passionate Lover:

I have finally put my faith wholly in God's unconditional love. I not only believe it with my mind now, but also with my heart. I realize that God wants us, wants to be with us, cares for us, and isn't anal when it comes to our wrong behaviors. He is for us. He wants to share His life with every person He has made. He cares for each of us and is willing to meet us where we are at, and not wait until we are willing to meet Him where He is at. In the past when I prayed for anyone to come into a relationship with Jesus… I focused totally on the possibility that they may not want to get to know the living God. That became the determining-factor for me, not God's un-surpassed love, beauty, compassion, desire to be with us, and His power to draw people to Himself in love. God is into changing hearts and minds, to bless us with life to the full. People do change; one moment they may be against God the next moment they may embrace Him.

In the past I saw God wanting to love us, but that He was waiting for us at a distance, longing for us to say yes to His love, and waiting for us to finally say yes to Him. I saw Him as a withdrawn, not willing to go full out, possibly letting people die without lifting a finger, and not helping those undergoing trials of temptations and adversity as only He could. I did this because deep down inside I believed in my heart for so long that God's love was conditional. I felt that God only loved those who loved Him. That He rejected or distanced Himself from anyone who stepped out of line, who was not behaving according to His standards.

This change that I now have come to I have experienced through reading Neil T. Anderson's book called, "The Bondage Breaker" and making the truth in the book a part of my beliefs. Believing the truth about how God sees me and fighting off the seductive lies from the devil that God is not good, that he is uncaring, distant, anal, angry, high-maintenance, capricious, fickle, and was only committed to those who could make it through the most enduring trials. The goal of these lies is to get me to think that I can live in freedom doing as I please… all by myself… but that is a false freedom… because in rejecting God I'd be ruled by Satan and his minions. True freedom is the ability to love with God's help. God is not ashamed to chase after us, to show His love for us, to seek us out, to invite us into relationship with Him.[111]

We Have Not Because We Ask Not:

On Sunday January 23, 2011 I realized that I had believed another lie. I had believed that God was passive, and lazily stood back, and let people suffer from addictions, repetitive sins, spiritual hunger and thirst, poor self-images and demonic oppression because He was waiting for them to come to Him; accept His standards, and do things His way all by them selves. As if we could figure out this all by ourselves. In other words He was not meeting people where they are at personally. I felt that this was the truth because I believed so many people were going nowhere spiritually. I also felt this to be true because of my own struggles. Fact is that I waited so long for help because I failed to ask God for His help sooner. Truth is, God is closer to us than we are to our selves. We only

[111] Cf. Luke 15:11-32

have to speak to Him and He hears us; and He answers us when we are ready and most open to learn from Him. We have not because we ask not. God does speak to us because the Bible says that Jesus speaks to each of us (This is because He is the Light of the world and therefore shines His light into each of our consciences /hearts/ and minds).[112] God does help the humble, and opposes the proud. We sometimes have trouble recognizing His voice from all the others we also hear. Sadly some of us tune God's voice out completely.

What people are also waiting for is for the Church to meet them where they are at, and to witness to the Light that shines into their hearts/minds/ and consciences telling and showing them the message of Jesus' grace. I am a part of God's Church and I want to do my part! Lord Jesus please help me to do your will in your time with your strength and with your love one step at a time, and one day at a time. Amen and Amen!

I Finally Get It:

I now think I understand how the concepts of grace and law relate to each other. I have often heard it said that God's love is free, or that God's love is unconditional (by this they mean we can't earn God's love by doing good works or keeping rules). But in the back of my head I always had the thoughts: "Yeah but if I choose to break God's commandments and refuse to repent then I'll go to Hell. So I need to Keep His commandments if I want to go to Heaven. But that seems to make going to Heaven conditional on works or keeping commandments. Do I somehow have to be good to get to Heaven? Do I earn my way to Heaven after all?"

This line of reasoning is compelling, but faulty. True: if I refuse to repent I'll go to Hell. Why? Because Heaven is a free gift that I need empty open hands to embrace. If my hands are full of lesser treasures (accumulated through mortal sin) how can I embrace God's free gift of Heaven? I can't unless I repent from embracing the lesser treasures. By embracing Jesus' grace we will embrace joy in doing so. If we don't repent we are walking in darkness. We keep Jesus' commandments because in doing so we love. If we think keeping Jesus' commandments (or just doing good works) earns us a place in Heaven then we are dead wrong.

We are under grace not law. Grace gets us to Heaven; not self-righteous rule keeping. We do good works to love; not to appease an angry and distant God.

If I want to love I need to focus on Jesus, on His gifts, His love, and listen to Him. If I focus on Law then freedom escapes me; love escapes me; and joy escapes me. I need to focus on what Jesus has done for us; is doing and will do through us.

Going to the Torah or Moral Law every time we fail in keeping it and digging down inside our hearts self-righteously to keep the Torah or Moral Law more deeply afterwards is not wise. The Torah and Moral Law are intended to point out sin. They have no power by themselves to make us obey them. Guilt should drive us to God. Being transformed by God's Love (the Holy Spirit) through faith, and relationship with Him is the wisest path to take to grow in supernatural Love. It is the only path to supernatural Love. Doing good deeds (prescribed by the Law (Torah, or Moral) or some other system of principles) with the hope of getting Salvation, points of merit, earthly badges of righteousness, favor from God, or the favor of our peers goes against the Spirit of Love. When we love for love's sake then we truly love God. Whenever we aim to get something out of the good works

[112] Cf. John 1:9

we are doing other than just loving people with those good works then we are off course. If we sin, then we don't do more or try harder to stay away from that sin. We confess it to God, and become dependent on Him in faith as He purifies us from the sins we commit. Often we commit sins because we have believed lies or half-truths. Often we commit sins because we aren't dependent on God's grace. If we are seeking perfection through keeping the Law we will soon find bondage to sin our lives. The Law can't save; only Jesus can. Often we commit sin because we aren't teachable. Pride is the root to committing sin.

When we love God and any other persons we don't want to harm, hurt, or offend them; we want to bless them. When we love we become sensitive towards those we love. When we love we care for those we love.

When we break the least commandment, we are guilty of breaking the whole Law: which is to love; because the whole law can be summarized in: love God, neighbor, and self. When we hold onto God's Love we will want to and actually love others. When we hold onto serious or mortal sin then we can't embrace God's love until we come to Him and throw ourselves at His mercy, grace, wisdom, and power to pry us loose from our mortal sin. We can't serve two masters: We will either hate one or love the other.

As Christians we are called to no longer sin. Not sinning means the Moral Law is binding on us. But aiming to not sin won't get us anywhere. A simple stone keeps all of the Ten Commandments perfectly. But that stone by itself can't dispense mercy. We are called to a higher goal: active love. If we focus on following and loving Jesus wherever we meet Him, then we will immediately uphold the Moral Law. But if we focus on not sinning then we will be Law focused and we will get nowhere fast.

Fulfilling Jesus commandments in His strength destroys our sinful actions. Hence our works done in His strength through faith in Him save us from our sins.

Believing in and trusting Jesus destroys our guilt; gives us joy; and inspires us to be like Him in love. To sum this up:

Jesus makes it possible for love to replace sin; and faith to defeat guilt. That is the full meaning of salvation.

Experiencing Consolation:

During most of my dark journey, I sought healthy consolation. But never really experienced it. There were times when I sinned gravely or mortally but the pleasures they brought lasted only until I felt the guilt of those sins. Today (January 30, 2011) for the first time in ever so many years I felt healthy consolation without sin, without doing good deeds; just because God loves me.

God Is My Anchor:

I now realize that when I begin to question my self-worth, feel threatened, or feel insecure only by getting in touch with the truth about what God says about me am I able to escape the lies behind those threats. When I fight off the lies with God's truths I feel strong and no longer feel weak or express myself as a needy person.

Saint Or No Saint?

When I first became ill with schizophrenia I began to read about Catholic Saints. One in particular was Saint Therese of Lisieux known as the "Little Flower". Because I was so screwed up, and still very judgmental in nature this Saint did not impress me. But at the same time I felt that all believers were Saints including me. Somehow I saw myself as a Saint at that time, but thought nothing much about the "Little Flower" in reading her

life's story. Years later, on Sunday, January 30, 2011 I realized my inconsistency, my judgment and my hypocrisy even though I had not thought about the "Little Flower" till this day. I immediately repented in faith and felt my burden lighten. It must be said that I have not looked upon myself as a "Saint" for a long time now; but I do look at myself as "holy" because God's Holy Spirit lives in me, and because the Bible tells me so. Today I read a short commentary on the Little Flower's life and I do see beauty, holiness, wisdom, and spiritual hunger in her life; all of which I was blind to so many years ago.

Dealing With A Dispassionate Jesus:

One major problem area for me has been that I encountered a dispassionate Jesus regularly when I practiced Listening Prayer, and I thought that was okay some of the time because of my warped heart, mind, and conscience. When I didn't think it was right I attempted to take Brad Jersak's advice to deal with it:

- Renounce the religious spirit.
- Repent from any belief in a silent, uncaring Jesus.
- Ask for the true Jesus to come and act.

I would practice these steps regularly (although not with the required depth), and so the religious spirit would often re-assert itself in my life. It then dawned on me that repenting from believing lies means I have to figure out which lies I believed and replace them with Jesus' truth.

I realized that I did not view Jesus all the time as gentle, meek, patient and humble; instead I saw Him as anal and petty when it came to me doing anything wrong; I also saw him as an abrasive and dark disciplinarian (I did not see this for what it was: wrong). Because I believed these lies about Jesus I wrongly treated other people in the same way. When I realized I had believed these lies and that Jesus was the opposite: meek, gentle, patient and humble; the religious spirit's re-appearances were dealt a deathblow because the devil's lies were uprooted and replaced with truth.

I also realized because I no longer expected Jesus to be dispassionate, I did not have to expect if from myself either towards others and myself. As a result Jesus took the abrasive negative energy out of me, and I became gentler, more patient, meeker, and a little more humble towards those people I wrongly treated. Without me knowing it at the time Jesus had worked repentance into my life. With Jesus changing how I saw Him; He also changed how I saw others. Thank you my Triune God!

Weighing Words: True Or False?

I now realize thanks to re-reading Brad Jersak's book: "Can You Hear Me?" that there is a three-principle procedure to be used to determine whether a word was intended for us from God or not:

First: Can we discern the source (Jesus' sheep know His voice) such surety requires faith and the ability to recognize God's voice. Our doubts ought not shut down our conversations. Even if we have confidence in the source we don't rely on this confidence all by itself. We go to the next step:

Second: We ask whether it is true. Does it line up with Scripture, the Church, and the Holy Spirit?

Third: We ask ourselves: does it bear good fruit?

If we have doubts or confusion about who is the source of the message… then we can

ask: Is it the truth? If we embrace it as truth yet see no eventual fruit then the message can't be from God.
I now realize that I have practiced different parts of the above steps off and on without realizing that the principles form a procedure. Having the above workable process to help me sort through messages that come to me gives me faith, and confidence in learning to discern the source and truth or falsehood of any message given to me directly. I therefore don't feel like a failure when I have confusion and doubt in my mind about the true source of any particular message I have received. I therefore don't have to fall for demonic lies that say: "See you don't know God's voice… This faith thing is too difficult… Others can do it maybe but not you… If you get it wrong others will get hurt… Or you'll land up acting like a fool if you carry on with this charade..."
Strangely a little while ago during my listening prayer devotions I saw a painting in my mind that I had painted sometime ago of the Lion of Judah, and the Lamb of God. Because I knew that these images were intended to represent Jesus I though that what followed had to be from the Lord (although I had my doubts). Fact is… devils can use forms we hold dear to deceive us… If their messages don't line up with the truth: Scripture, Church, and Holy Spirit; and don't bear good fruit, then no matter how real the images are they are being used to deceive us. Satan can appear as an angel of light. In my Listening Prayer devotion mentioned above the lion had no teeth… a sure sign that it was Satan impersonating Jesus because the lion attempted to swallow me but failed in a dramatic way.
I did believe for a little while after that God let this interaction happen to confirm that my salvation from Him is secure despite Satan's attempts at deceptions. But this was not the case. God does not want me to be dependent on any demon's words or images for my security. God is good, He told me a long time ago that I am not one of those who fall back: case closed! I don't need to depend on demons for anything good. Satan's BIGGEST lie is that He knows the truth, and he will slimy his way in getting certain facts right to hook us and draw us away from God.

Punishment From God?

For a considerable time until now whenever I have judged somebody I have felt strange manifestations of discomfort, pain, itchiness, infections, or sickness immediately afterwards in certain parts of my body. These manifestations I took as signs that I needed to repent from certain judgments that my conscience failed to detect while committing those judgments. Each time I repented the strange manifestations would immediately disappear. This works fine (and I am grateful for it), but there is a temptation to wrongly think that God is being wrathful towards me for my sins with these strange manifestations in an attempt to get me to repent each time this happens. This is totally wrong! The Bible says it is God's goodness and kindness that leads us to repentance not His wrath. People who know and love God should not immediately think that all the hardships they experience to be a result of God's wrath... that is what people who don't know or hate God may do.
What we do in the spiritual has ramifications in the physical and vice-versa. God did not out of anger deliberately program us to hurt when we sin. When we sin we do damage to the natural order of how God intended things to be. Sin is incompatible with the way God designed things: hence the pain we feel when we hurt or judge others; and when we do selfish things. True, God did give us the ability to feel pain, but this is not meant as

punishment because of His wrath. It is meant to guide us back to Him. Pain is a gift, not a curse.

Would Jesus Do That? Or Would I Do That?

A little while back I was reading a testimony about a woman who went through a difficult time. As she prayed, and revisited the memory surprisingly Jesus took her place and healed her from the wound associated with the memory. I couldn't imagine Jesus getting soiled and violated again thinking he had done His job 2000 years ago… He was free from suffering, and paid His dues in my mind forever. I then realized that this was my attitude… not His. When the early Church experienced persecution Jesus words to Saul was: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."[113] I too have under gone suffering (not the magnitude of Jesus', but suffering none the less). I now realize that my suffering is not over because love requires that I suffer: If one can't carry pain one can't love. Love and pain go together.

Approaching God; Or God Approaching Us?

In Old Testament times there was an ornate hierarchy put into place by which God's people had to go through in order to approach God. Those with deformities, diseases, bleeding, open sores, or illnesses were not allowed to participate in Temple worship. Why? For a long time I spiritualized this. I thought that those who were not healthy physically represented in the spiritual those who were deformed by sinful attitudes and hardened hearts. I further thought that they needed to deal with their sinfulness through repentance before they could gain access into God's presence. But that is misguided. Any time we clean ourselves up before we go into God's presence, we have become self-righteous. Only God can clean us up. So who then do the unhealthy in Old Testament times represent in the spiritual? They represent those who *don't want to repent*. How do we know this? We know it because Jesus (the God-Man) approached, loved and healed lepers, those with deformities, those with illnesses, and the demonized because He knew many of them wanted healing and peace with God. Hear this: "Jesus approaches" us; Jesus seeks out the lost sheep, and Jesus invites those with heavy burdens to learn a new way of life with Him and to remain in His presence forever. The lesson I have learned from this is: If I am dirtied up from sin… I shouldn't attempt to clean myself up all by myself… I just go to God and ask Him to clean me up and He will… if not immediately then eventually. Those who wait on the Lord are never disappointed.

Dealing With Images From The Dark Side:

As I continued to practice Listening Prayer things sped up and got more and more interesting.

Yes I have benefited in enormous ways from practicing Listening Prayer, but then for sometime I struggled to hear God's voice (feeling blocked much of the time) until God and I dealt with the dispassionate Jesus completely. From then on I slowly got more confident in Listening Prayer and I reaped many spiritual benefits. But then recently my imagination got over run with demon inspired imagery. Here is a taste of it:

On Tuesday, February 8, 2011 when I got home and put a few things in order and returned to practicing Listening Prayer… I had this image of a rough, abrasive, muscle-bound, harsh, shallow, cartoon shaped Conan Barbarian type of Jesus attempting to grab and invite me into carrying his HEAVY cross with him. I recoiled and intuitively knew

[113] Cf. Acts 9

this was not the real Jesus. I dismissed it… then a little later I went into prayer again only to see this sissy type of Jesus full of self-pity, tears, and weakness beckoning me to come and help him carry his too HEAVY a cross. I know that the real Jesus is no sissy.
I deduced that the demons were inviting me to carry HEAVY BURDENS intended to weigh me down and discourage me from practicing Listening Prayer with Jesus being the source and direction of my life. They know I am inheriting what Jesus died on the cross and rose again after to give me: a real, satisfying, interactive, and meaningful relationship with the King of kings: Almighty God.
As I continued to practice Listening Prayer I got more images from the pit of Hell. I eventually realized that this meant I must have more blocks to practicing authentic Listening Prayer with Jesus, because every time I attempted to meet Jesus in my imagination demons would appear trying to imitate the real Jesus. When I submitted my mind to the real Jesus the demonic imagery disappeared and my mind went blank (meaning that this was not a result from my schizophrenia). Realizing that I had a major block that allowed demons to over run my imagination I asked God what the block was, and He said it was my, "intellectual pride." I asked myself what does this look like? Brad Jersak's book says it has to do with skepticism; when things don't work like I think they ought to the spiritual seed that God sends my way I land up digging up and throwing away.
The antidote to my intellectual pride is "child like trust", "being teachable", "practicing humility", and becoming "more dependent" on God. This I am aiming to do.
Thank you Holy Trinity, and Rob Beck for giving me Brad Jersak's book on Listening Prayer!
I am convinced that skepticism is rooted in not standing on or being rooted in God's Love, and not being sure about who God says I am. When I don't wear my spiritual armor… and remember and believe what God says about me in the Bible then the demons will sow lies, confusion, and skepticism in my heart and mind to drive me away from the real Jesus. They will use my mind to wrongly focus on others when I am really called to humble myself, not others!
I am a part of Christ's body; He therefore cares deeply for me. I am a partaker of Christ – He therefore nourishes me and cares for my every need. I am firmly rooted in Christ Jesus and am now being built up in Him.
I am not *worthy* of God's promises; but I do have *worth* (I am desired by God, I have purpose from God, I am useful in God's purposes, and I am valuable in God's eyes). God cares for me. One may believe all of this on the surface in the mind, but believe ideas contrary to them in one's heart. I am finding Listening Prayer to be a valuable approach in dealing with shame, unworthiness, lies, skepticism, and my hard heart; and bringing repentance and healing into my life. Thank you Jesus!

Psalms & Gospels In The Dark Become Light:

When I first became ill with schizophrenia, I went directly to the Psalms and recited them over and over again especially a hand full of them to fight off the fear and apprehension I felt as my life fell apart. Reciting the Psalms gave some consolation in the darkness, reminded me of better times, and gave hope for my future. For some time I could not feel the reality of the Psalms. I rushed through them when I recited them after having recited them so many times in the past. Then on Friday, February 11, 2011 I decided to imagine and enter into those Psalms (this slowed things down): picturing Jesus as the Good

Shepherd, resting in His presence, and absorbing the beauty of His creation reflected in my imagination, and partaking in communion with Him. These have now become my meeting places; whereas before I had a hit and miss reality in finding places for Jesus and I to meet in prayer. These Psalms have just as much power to comfort, and allow us to meet Jesus in the Light (good times) as they do in the Dark (bad times). God prefers to act and impart life in these encounters and meeting places. God will never leave me nor forsake me. Moreover, The same is true about the Gospels: they are coming alive for me in my heart and imagination. They are becoming meeting places between Jesus and I and those whose actions are recorded in them. Yes I do every now and then have blocks that I need to repent from… but Jesus often uses internal visions to bring that about with His help. I repent from sin in response to His voice; not the other way around: I don't repent so I can hear His voice. He loves me more than I thought. It is His kindness, love, mercy, and patience that lead me to repentance. God loves everyone… and gives each person the desires of her or his own heart. Blessed are those who wait on Him, for they will never ultimately be disappointed.

Kindness Of God:

After Mass on Sunday, February 20, 2011 I realized that I was short tempered, was policing people's movements, and had a demanding spirit. I knew I needed God's help to deal with this attitude (as this type of situation seems to repeat itself over and over in my life)… and I was tempted to search and analyze my memory for where I made the judgment earlier in the day that led to my unacceptable attitude just then. Then the thought entered my mind: "It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance." I therefore decided to trust in God's kindness in dealing with my problem… and sure enough He brought to my mind where I had made the judgment earlier in the day… I was then able to repent in faith from it… and sure enough this restored my ability to be kind and loving in my relationships.

This lesson reminds me that God wants me holy and pure more than I want it. That He is ever mindful, kind, merciful, and patient with the whole of creation. And those who approach Him in faith believing Him to be good will receive from Him many gifts. Thank you Jesus. Amen, and Amen!

More Inner Healing:

I found that until today (Sunday, February 20, 2011) that I have looked down on a lot of people under certain conditions; those who are far away from me, and surprisingly those who are close to me. I have tended to judge them, laugh at them, mock them, and not care for any of them, as I should when certain issues came up. What is beneath this (I asked the Lord Jesus)? What is the foundation for this? I received the impression that it has to do with rejection and reacting to it with pride, anger, and hatred (what I wrongly saw as my strength)… and not having fully renewed my mind/heart in this area. I heard God saying that there is plenty of cleansing to be done in this area of my heart/ mind/ and conscience.

I confessed to God that I am sorry for my sinful and judgmental attitudes towards others. Such as not looking with kindness on the poor, the strange, the disabled, those who stand out as unwanted, those who are undesirable; the weak, the hurting, those that society's cliques do not care for, and those who are outcasts. I did this because I thought I was better, stronger, smarter, or more attractive than them in certain categories. I wanted

nothing to do with weakness, because I wanted to be seen as strong. I found my strength in my hatred.
Truth is that for a long time I felt like an outcast, showing weakness, and wanting desperately to belong at any cost. Lord God what a shallow life I have led! What a lie I have built my life on: the illusion of being stronger and better than those who are weak. I esteemed the riches of the world to be of more worth than loving all who passed my way after I was rejected so long ago. Indeed I am not able to love others with this attitude. I was not merciful. I was not gracious… I cared not where people came from, were at, or where they were going to if they were in the wrong crowd (in my opinion back then).
I guess that this all started when I was rejected by my peers at school as a young child. What did I do? I hated those who rejected me; I would show them I was strong and that I did not need them.
Looking at this now I decided to repent in faith (with the Lord Jesus' help) from this pride; and I repented in faith from deciding to hate so I could feel strong. I also forgave those who ostracized me, and rejected me so long ago. I commanded those demons that have led me astray to go to Jesus and do what He commands them to do.
I asked the Holy Spirit to please wash this shit out of my heart, mind, and life because I can do without it now and forevermore. I am not doing this now because I am so wise or because it was my own idea… but because my God is the Good Shepherd and has planted a desire within me to be holy, clean, joyous, and pure before Him. Thank you Jesus for the work you have been doing in my life so far and for all that you promised me you would eventually do in my life.

Good News:

Today went so well for me compared to so many days in the past thanks be to God! It got a little bumpy for a brief while but I recovered because of God's goodness. Then I had a talk with a beautiful Christian woman at work and she gave me my daily bread: "Jesus paid for it all!" What a joy! What a relief! What good news! It takes the pressure off of me!

Accusations Verses Encouraging:

I now realize: yes I have done some pretty dumb things in the past… and that regularly I have thought my condemning thoughts appropriate as I hit myself over my head with them even though I had confessed them to God and priests in the past. I saw God as disappointed in me; and so I saw Him agreeing with my condemning thoughts. Yes, God does convince of our sins… but when we repent… by letting God clean us up He won't bring to mind our former wrongs yet again. Truth is that Satan is the author of my condemning thoughts. I have been tuned into Satan's condemning messages for such a long time that I often think his words are God's. No more. God loves me.

Journeying From Abrasiveness To Roughness To Abruptness To Kindness; Journeying From Rigidity To Flexibility & Journeying From Closed-Mindedness To Being Teachable:

I am now seeing God more and more as gentle… yes there have been times when I saw it but they faded away because deep down inside of me there have been lies that negated this truth. Tonight I was listening to part of a Brad Jersak seminar from the Internet where he said something that struck me as true and worth meditating on now… but then I had confusion about it because of the way I have seen and wrongly believed my past to be. I then with the help of the Holy Spirit saw where my past reasoning went wrong. Brad

re-iterated that Jesus is gentle, kind, and patient. He meets us where we are at and slowly guides us step by step in the right direction, and right path; and journeys with us. Brad said that Jesus uses His rod and staff on wolves and dogs to protect us. Jesus doesn't abuse us with His authority (rod and staff). Jesus is a gentleman. Jesus doesn't use His staff to keep me bent over cowering in fear and false humility. For me where I am at I often don't realize how wrong my judgments are, my accusatory speech can be, my preaching, and my roughness when I am doing so. I badly don't want to act or behave in such manners (within and outside), and I do repent when the Holy Spirit convinces me of where I have gone wrong. Jesus wants me to walk upright, with dignity, in complete freedom, with wholesome pride in being His adopted son, face up-lifted, without shame, with confidence, as someone to be respected, honored, at peace, and an imitator of Jesus. Jesus does not bully us into submission. Jesus doesn't try to control us; instead He gives us self-control. Jesus does exercise our spiritual muscles but doesn't manhandle us. These insights have led to me having a more open mind, I am much more teachable, and everything doesn't need to be spelled out in exhaustive details for me like before. My memory, flexibility, and understanding are so much more improved. I latch onto ideas faster. I feel like I am standing on real earth, grounded in Christ and at peace. I don't feel stupid, limited, and fearful anymore. Thank you Jesus!

Looking For Dirty Laundry???

In the past when people would let me down I found that I was very good at coming up with possible motives behind their actions that were evil, sinister, insensitive, selfish, uncaring, and hostile that made me want to be preachy, angry, and judgmental towards them and that I would hold as true without evidence. It came so naturally to me. Thankfully the Holy Spirit had His hand on my mouth so often, but on Tuesday, March 22, 2011 I finally repented in faith as I recognized the evil of this dynamic at work within me. One gets kindness reciprocated more often than if one judges and becomes abrasive towards the people who let us down. To my surprise I now don't fall into judging others as frequently as before because I have repented from its roots. Thank you Jesus!

Revelation On Sinful nature:

God has shown to me that all my sins ultimately come from my will. If our wills are supported with God's grace, light, love, acceptance, life, anointing, and strength then sinning will become more undesirable or difficult to do. If we have emptiness, darkness, weakness, shame, and pride; and lack God's life: i.e.) are spiritually dead, then we will be slaves to sin. Yes sin also springs from our hearts and minds, but before it can do so the seeds must come from our wills deciding to believe or not believe certain lies or truths. Ultimately sin has its origin in our wills. For a more thorough treatment on this topic check out the essay: "Some Spiritual Insights" from this Website. The truth that we don't have a sin-nature has been liberating for me. Yes I do sin, but I don't have a sin-nature. All my sins are directly or indirectly a result of decisions made by my will.

Sin comes from our wills when supported by our darkened minds, and darkened hearts. The mind when unsupported by truth, and God's light will lead us to make bad decisions… sometimes leading to sin. The heart is where desires grow when the will decides to believe or reject different ideas or pleas presented to it. If we consent to believe lies with our wills then those lies will be planted in our hearts giving birth to desires that are dark and sinful. The will when not submitted to God's will, shall be in bondage to the darkness of Satan's kingdom. The heart and mind nudge the will in certain

directions; whereas the will nudges the mind and heart in directions too. Sometimes they are opposed to each other as if there is a war going on.
An un-submitted will to God's will, an un-submitted mind to God's mind, and a heart that desires things contrary to God's heart will ruin any person. All fallen humans will struggle in these areas (some greatly; others moderately).

Abiding In Jesus[114]:

When we depend on idols we are walking in the flesh. When we depend on Jesus we are walking in the Spirit and abiding in Him. If we are consciously depending on Jesus, then we can be certain that we are living out our faith in Him. This might sound kind of "fake" or "flimsy" but when we believe God answers our prayers for us to depend on Him then we are actually depending on Him and therefore abiding in Him. If we are very unsure whether we are abiding in Jesus, then it is likely we aren't fully abiding in Him. Trusting, and believing in Jesus for His help in whatever situation we find ourselves is key to abiding in Him. Checking in with God regularly throughout the day is key and also a wise way of growing in dependence on God. Paying close attention to our emotions/weakness/desires/or strengths in light of what the Bible says is a shrewd way to foster abiding in Jesus. It is through our faith that we will overcome the world.
If we are glorying in earthly things then when they are damaged, removed, stolen, or soiled we will be humbled or lose our reputations. If we are glorying in our self-efforts, expected behaviors, rule keeping, or reputations, then we will either become self-righteous or defeated; eventually be tripped-up losing our reputations, and so be humbled willingly or unwillingly. If our focuses are on things that don't last then we will lose our good pride or humility. Glorying in idols is done in unhealthy pride. If we glory: "delight" in Jesus (or honor Him) He won't disappoint us. If we aim for this life only, then we may eventually lose it all. If we aim for the next, then we will have all we need in this life and bounty in the next life.
How do we know we are depending on idols? If we are trying to substitute joy with either happiness or pleasures, then we are depending on idols. Pleasure is meant for the body, happiness for the mind, and joy for the heart. The only true joy is experiencing God's light, life, love, fullness, and presence in our hearts and sharing it.

Convinced That Arguing Accomplishes Nothing:

In the past when I have disagreed with others I have attempted to argue with them in the hope of changing the way they think. Over the years I have slowly realized that arguing never bore any good fruit. When those who are close to me have thought differently especially on controversial or very important topics I have been learning that not judging and not condemning means that I ought not argue with or try to change their beliefs. Prayer and love is the only path to take. Yes I like a good debate done in a fresh non-judgmental manner yet those are rare. And if somebody asks me what I think about a topic then I am free to share my opinion. But today without arguing, God emphatically showed me that He does not approve of arguing, because it either comes from judging or moves to towards judging. Thank you Jesus. Thank you Jesus for forgiving me all the times I have argued with others. Unfortunately there was still some darkness within me that wanted to argue or manipulate others… thankfully that too would be dealt with eventually.

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[114] These ideas come from Jeff VanVonderen, and Peter Herbeck.

Keeping Things Simple:
The long search for peace has finally ended! Yes, Jeff VanVonderen's book on shame had it right all along. The Christian life is not about the: Do more… try harder… give up… do more…etc. cycle. It is about resting in God through what Jesus has done on the cross for all. I don't have to have a complicated… or deep… theology or understanding on Salvation to live in freedom. Often deep theologies are confusing or misleading… I know mine has been. Many are going to be surprised on Judgment Day (me none the less) as to who will be given mercy and who will be condemned. Moreover I am no longer only looking for insights with Salvation in mind while reading Scripture. This means that God can speak with me through the Bible in a much broader sense than before. Judgment and mercy are in God's hands not mine. My trust is in God: the Father, the only begotten Son, and the Holy Spirit. I have a Church that is much wiser than I am. I have sisters and brothers that love me, pray for me, and whom I love back. I am most blessed. Thank you Lord God for bringing me to this place of peace! Amen and Amen!

Light And Darkness: Goodness And Sin:
Sin is fulfilling legitimate desires with inappropriate goods. Just like darkness is a lack of visible light emptiness or hunger is a lack of God's goodness; Hunger is not bad… without it we would not know what a full stomach is and how good it feels to be satisfied with food after going without sustenance for a period of time. Being in a state of emptiness or darkness will lead to sin when God does not have His proper place. God is Light (Goodness). He seeks to fill us with His goodness. When we feed off Him we will no longer satisfy legitimate desires with inappropriate goods: we will sin less often. Things that replace God inappropriately are idols.
Our hearts have many rooms within them. Some rooms may only be visited when we are young… and we might forget about them as new attractions come along. God might be in some of those rooms, and demons might be in others, and in still others there may be darkness cluttered with rubbish.
This definition on what sin is enabled me with God's help to jettison part of my mask because I finally understood its purpose. More insight was needed to completely deal with it.

The Two Sides Of A Coin: Principles & Abiding:
The only principle one needs to live life was called the "Logos" (in the Greek language 2000 years ago) that in part means The Divine Principle and was given as a name for Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus is all we need. Focusing on learning new principles will never bring rest or the power to live a moral life all by them selves. Without Jesus I am dead, empty, sinful, and helpless. Jesus is sufficient, loving, compassionate, merciful, gracious, sustaining, patient, present, and humble. Principles that don't lead you to Jesus but away from Him lead away from life not to it. Therefore relationships with Jesus are key to following Him on the paths He has chosen for each of us. This is the first side of the coin.
The other side of the coin is to abide in Jesus. I for the longest time resisted the clear teaching found in the Bible that all we needed to do in order to abide in Jesus was to believe in or rest one's faith in Him. By putting one's faith in Jesus one will gain a healthy respect for the Bible, have an appetite for reading it. One will grow in love, joy, peace, hope, patience, faithfulness, and self-control. The emptiness in one's heart will be filled… and one will have courage to live the life Jesus calls one to.

Saturday, April 23, 2011:
Within the past few days I began to feel anger towards those I saw rejecting certain truths revealed in the Bible and taught by the Church since the beginning because I saw the rejections as threats to God's Kingdom. As this attitude made its way into my conscious mind… I was gripped with the fear of a Hell that was so scary, frightful, dreadful, black, and hopeless yet did not match what the Bible teaches on the subject. I was eventually led to repent from my judgmental/angry attitude with the result that there was peace and stability within me along with a certainty that Hell was more 'just' than what my fears made it out to be. Then again I felt like I was in a battle:
(264) Wednesday, April 27, 2011:
I felt it very difficult to navigate through my mind, while at work, and at home. The littlest things would set me off in anger if not rage… although I kept myself from venting on others. I really did not know what was happening to me. I was very tempted (which the demons delighted in…) to get angry with God… But that road leads to emptiness, and negativity; with an: "I am in the right… so f--k you" attitude that kills charity. But today I felt a root pulled out of my heart. The root had to do with getting my way all of the time: you know; being selfish, and caring for nobody but myself. When this root was yanked out of my heart I found myself seeing things differently. My motivation to work was put on a more loving foundation; I began to see others differently (not as an inconvenience) or as people in my way. Thank you Lord Jesus, Father God, and Holy Spirit. I am grateful that you loved me and kept me from giving up. Amen, and Amen.
I then spoke with my Mother and she said she had received a word from God for me along with following two passages: (2 Kings 5 (the whole chapter)) and:

and he sent a man before them—
Joseph, sold as a slave.
They bruised his feet with shackles,
his neck was put in irons,
till what he foretold came to pass,
till the word of the LORD proved him true.
The king sent and released him,
the ruler of peoples set him free.
He made him master of his household,
ruler over all he possessed,
to instruct his princes as he pleased
and teach his elders wisdom.[115]

She said the next time I encounter the urge to get negative and agree with those voices in my head that are attempting to turn me away from the Lord, I ought to just praise Jesus, and repeat, "By His stripes I have been healed" and I'll eventually be completely healed. I am really looking forward to this very much!
Fruit From A Retreat At A Place Named Rivendell:
In response to a block I had in prayer on May 6, 2011, God gave me the word: "Hermes". At first I was confused as to what it might mean. But eventually I was led to do a Web

[115] Psalm 105:17-22

search and I found out that Hermes was a Greek and Roman god but also that, "hermes" is the Greek word from which we get our English word hermeneutics. The meaning of the word hermeneutics has to do with how one correctly interprets, weighs, and applies Scripture or how one knows an interpretation of Scripture is wrong.
Either way I realized through this that my take on a certain Bible verse was dead wrong and in major need of correction. Later on God would reveal to me that I had another issue where I was sitting over others in judgment with bad, warped, and dark hermeneutics. There was also an evil spirit that masqueraded as Hermes in my mind/imagination/ and spiritual space (as I attempted to meet with Jesus in my safe place). Hermes was trying to come between Jesus and I through seduction, confusion, and lies. Thankfully this got dealt with through perseverance, and repentance, with the authority and the love of the Holy Trinity. The first issue was dealt with at Rivendell. The second got dealt with on Tuesday, May 17, 2011.
I now know what the words: "by His wounds I have been healed" mean. It means that God has put His life and love within me... and has renewed parts of my mind with His light, and destroyed strongholds in my heart so that I'm free from many sins that I used to commit in the past. Yes: "In repentance and rest is my salvation... and in quietness and trust is my strength." I still fall into sins such as pride unbelief and judgmental-ism... but God will complete the work He began in me (Cf. Philippians 1:6). Yet until death I am not a completed work of God (Cf. Philippians 3:12). I am a work in progress! As a planting of the Lord I will grow in faith, love, and hope over time. I will grow in the virtues, in character, in courage, in wisdom, in healing, and in compassion. Thank you Jesus you are my total Righteousness!
In all truth I don't like much about my mental health at this time (Saturday, May 7, 2011) except that it is much, much, much better than what it used to be... and that is saying a lot. Never the less not my will be done but God's will be done now and forevermore, Amen and Amen!

Monday, May 16, 2011:

Over the past few weeks I have been learning to recognize more and more what the devil's voice looks, feels, and sounds like. He loves to discourage, lie, steal, and kill what God wants to plant, water, nurture, grow, and prosper in my life. Today I realized that when I begin to panic or focus and encourage my anxiety it is because I am entertaining the devil's lies as truth. When this happens I lose touch with reality and go into really bad places. I can do a lot more than my negative self-talk (inspired by the devil) has limited me to. I Rene Lafaut can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me. God's word is the only sound foundation… all other ground is sinking sand.

Embracing Opportunity:

For a long time I wanted to leap from what I perceived as my poor memory and my limited understanding to where I wanted to be at. I felt this tug-a-war within me: where I was at and where I wanted to be. I then decided to embrace where I was at: my limitations whatever they might be. I embraced my limitations and began to see them as opportunities and not curses that lower my self-esteem (as much of my adult life was permeated with). With this my attitude changed again to: "Thank you Lord God for making me the way you have... I am grateful!"
But then I gradually began to remember how I had such a great memory when I was a youngster. Moreover I was reminded of Jesus' promise that: "nothing is impossible for

her or him who has faith." And, Paul's New Testament assertion that: "I can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens me."
If you asked me a week ago: Do I believe the Bible? I'd say, "Yeah I really do" and if you further had to asked me: Did I believe these two sayings found in the Bible? I'd have to say err… not fully… but now on June 4, 2011, I am claiming these two promises as my own, and will build in part my (spiritual/intellectual/physical/artistic/emotional/work/ and social) life on them. But for such a long time the seeds of: lies, negativity, criticalness, jealousy, selfishness, resentments, hatreds, pride, anger, blindness, and darkness… that had a grip on my life planted by Satan's minions into my thinking, believing, emotions, attitudes, dispositions, and actions had the effect of destroying many of the opportunities abilities, and aptitudes that God had intended on giving me. I intend to reclaim what the locusts have stolen all with God's help, because they have stolen plenty. And I intend to with God's help to build on them day in and day out.
I am reminded of the parables about the "Talents" as taught by Jesus. The wealth that God entrusts to His servants are opportunities for all sorts of things. God is into growth, multiplying, increase, character building, prosperity, plenty, and winning when it comes to (spiritual/intellectual/physical/artistic/emotional/work/ and social aspects of life) provided they serve God's purposes and our Spiritual growth. Things have got to be good for those around us and for us, for God to bless them.
Thank you Holy Trinity for your leadership, and care for my life in all these matters. Amen and Amen!

Friendship:

Quite a while ago I heard a co-worker tell somebody that it didn't matter to her whether or not everyone liked her. If somebody didn't want to be her friend she was gracious enough to comply with that person's wishes. She also knew and exercised the right to choose and decide whom she wanted to be friends with. Today I realized that I needed to embrace this wisdom… and in the process found more peace. Thank you Holy Trinity!
Then on Sunday, May 29, 2011 I felt caught in a web within my soul (will, mind, and emotions) and unable to figure away out into freedom. I was then confronted about my attitude and I eventually realized that beneath the demand within me to have others be my friends was my selfishness. When I realized this I repented from it in faith and found more freedom… and I resolved to believe that God would complete the work He began within me. Thank you Holy Trinity!

Jesus Is The Key To Good Fruit: Not The Law:

Where is the power to love supernaturally going to come from? By embracing the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ through faith and jettisoning one's trust in the law to bring about good works, right behavior, and salvation. Jesus wants to lead us, he wants to teach us, He wants us to bear much good fruit, and He wants to save us. The law makes nothing perfect[116], it only points out sin[117]. Grace is not a license to sin. The power of sin is in the law.[118] Either embrace Jesus or embrace the law. The former will lead to love, good works and good fruit, whereas the latter will lead to judging, bitterness, depression, legalism, condemnation, judging, anxiety, hatred, malice, and criticism. The New

[116] Hebrews 7:19
[117] Romans 3:20
[118] 1 Corinthians 15:56

Testament is about bearing good fruit. The Old Testament is about rule keeping. There is power in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Being rule based leads to negativity and unhealthy relationships.
Those that are caught between the law and grace will do well to stand on the Good News found in Paul's letters found in the New Testament. God's word is utterly trustworthy: Like Saint Augustine said: The New Testament is revealed in the Old, and the Old Testament is explained in the New. Embrace God's word and a rich harvest will come to you. Ignore it and your barns will be empty. Don't put your trust in rules, put it in the person of Jesus Christ. He will guide you into love, commitment, hope, and peace
Thank you Jesus for showing me this.
Thank you June for encouraging me and steering me in this direction.

Sunday, June 26, 2011:

How does one love un-conditionally? (1) By not making my warmth and kindness towards people conditional on what I see them doing or believing. (2) By meeting people where they are at and listening to them. (3) By not being motivated by unreasonable fears or lies. This is the way God loves us.
God said He is watching over His word to perform it. God has promised that I will love… and I am counting on Him to fulfill His word and promises. Love is not motivated by putting all of one's hope, energy and trust into keeping or serving the Old Testament Law. The power of sin is in the Law not the grace of Jesus Christ[119]. Saint Paul wrote in the New Testament:

> Do you not know, brothers and sisters—for I am speaking to those who know the law—that the law is binding on a person only during that person's lifetime? Thus a married woman is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives; but if her husband dies, she is discharged from the law concerning the husband. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.
> In the same way, my friends, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God.[120]

We are not married to the law. We no longer aim to please the Law. We are married to Jesus. We are called to bear good fruit in the New Covenant… not focus on rule keeping as was expected in the Old Covenant. Love is not motivated by: "Do I have to?" or, "this sucks because it is required from me - thinking" or, "must I do it?" or, "I don't have a choice in the matter." Such attempts at motivation most of the time border on law-mentality or slave-mentality and won't amount to anything beautiful quickly.
Love on the other hand springs from "hope" or the expectation of joy or the joy of knowing that it will benefit somebody. Love wants to love, to bless, and to give. Love does not see things from an obligation point of view or if I don't do it then I go to Hell

[119] Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:56
[120] Romans 7:1-4, NRSV

mentality. Such love is fear (slave) based and is not "faith" based and won't accomplish much of anything. Love is not motivated by unhealthy fears. The Law when focused on incorrectly engenders fear. Fear is a magnet to sin and negativity. Jesus is the better way (as talked about in the book of Hebrews) into the presence of God who is Love. We inherit by faith (as the book of Galatians says) the gifts of the Spirit, not by attempting to uphold the Law. The gifts of the Spirit include us bearing supernatural unconditional love towards others through the Spirit through faith in Jesus. Love is a gift; it is not earned; it is not owed to me. Once these thoughts were put into place my fear of going to Hell went away. Thank you June, Dan, and Saint Paul for this breathe of fresh air.

Being Led by the Spirit:

How do we by the Spirit put to death the miss deeds of the flesh? When we sense a lack of love or good fruit towards others in our lives, we ought eventually to go to God in prayer asking Him where we went wrong (what led up to the kaka)... and the Holy Spirit will show us (sometimes immediately; other times we need to practice patience until He shows us the block)... then in response to the Spirit's discernment we will either repent in faith from sin with the Spirit's help (also asking for forgiveness where necessary) and find life, or we will be asked to replace lies with truth in our beliefs. We might also be called to jettison unreasonable fears either that we have immediate control over and can dismiss, or otherwise the Holy Spirit will point out what lies are motivating those fears. Once the lies are brought into the light we move into the light where there is freedom. The word of God doesn't yield barren fields. We are called to bear much good fruit.

I have talked to the Holy Spirit and He has given me a mental image of a war ship made of metal painted gray with many guns meant for war. He further said that it represents my fears. Those fears are BIG (because the boat is humungous) so they must be unreasonable. Fear produces cowardice-ness. Perfect Love casts out all fear. Fear is removed by renewing the mind with the word of God.

Today, on Monday, June 27, 2011 I was reading the book of Romans and felt chains of fear fall off of me. The armored gray ship is gone. I am free to love. Thank you Holy Trinity! Thank you Saint Paul!

A Dose Of More Humility:

Today, Saturday, July 2, 2011, I was thinking how some people can be so defective to the point where I would get all torn up inside about them. Then the thought came to me: "Yeah… you have just as many things wrong with you as anybody else." That was humbling. I have known for some time that the Holy Spirit is in charge of convicting others not me. But every now and then I would be very tempted to "humble" other people, when I knew quiet well that God asked me to humble myself not my neighbor. This thought: "Yeah you have just as many things wrong with you as anybody else" has helped me see others with more humility. Thank you Holy Spirit for your gifts of love!

Happiness:

Some say that we all want the same thing. Yes: we all want happiness. But we are all divided on how to get that happiness. Some seek happiness by getting things; and some seek happiness by giving things. The former is not always wrong. We all like to get things… but only a few people like to really give. I know that I am at the crossroads in my life. Do I seek for more things to make me happy, or do I look for things that will make others happy? I know that if I seek to get stuff it never ultimately satisfies. But when I give I am so happy. However I find that there is still a lot of fear within me. Often

I give in response to fear. I guess I need to pray about it and deal with it when it comes up. Perfect love casts out all fear. Amen, and Amen! Thank you Jesus for bringing me here. It is much better than ever before.

Dealing With Self Pity:

Whenever I felt that others might reject me because of my selfishness or my many other moral failings, I would fall into a dramatic battering of myself over the head and wallowing in sad self-pity. These feelings of sadness were so deep and intense (along with my self-loathing) that I became dependent on others to nudge me out of such moods. I would want somebody who was sympathetic, gentle and non-judgmental to build up my faith and happiness. But that is not what I needed. What I needed was somebody who would say, "No!" to my selfish, self-pity focused, and insecure maneuvers. Thankfully God gave me a wife who would not put up with this shit of mine. She calls me to be strong, not wallowing in my weakness rooted in pride and selfishness. Thank you Sophie for your people smarts!

Realizing this I had some major renouncing to do of believing the many lies from evil spirits who loved to nurse my self-pity rooted in my selfishness; and also I had to repent in faith from my selfishness. This brought more joy to me… along with granting me a better attitude of love. After I renounced the lies I invited the Holy Spirit into those places where I moped or sulked about life's unfairness and He came with joy.

(Tuesday, July 6, 2011): Another Step From Judgment To Grace:

It seems that every time I discover a root within me that has led to me being judgmental I find freedom for brief periods after the root is dealt with, only for more roots to surface with more chaos and brokenness to come along.

At the heart of this dilemma for me has been my view of God's image. Is God a ruthless, punitive, angry, anal, hateful, and demanding Judge that withholds His love from those who sin?

I surely struggled to view others graciously, and found it hard to see others without bringing Hell, sin and judgment into the equation. When I saw others sinning in grave or mortal ways I felt judgment rise within me instead of love and grace. Because I saw them as threats to life or passage to heaven… and I wanted to remain loyal to a false image of God who seemed to reject sinners. Anyone who has read the Gospels knows that Jesus loves sinners. Boy was my theology out of whack.

I now realize more firmly that when people reject God they cut themselves off from God because God respects their boundaries and choices. God does not cut Himself off from them. God is LOVE, not hatred. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that the world might not perish but have Eternal life through Him. God gives Himself for all, and to all… and ultimately gives to each what they desire. Therefore we need to watch what we desire.

God loves us independently of what we do: this is called unconditional love. God loves because He is LOVE. Hell is cutting our selves off from His love. We are called to love others unconditionally; not hold back our love when they do stuff that displeases God or us. That has been nearly impossible for me to do for such a long time with only brief interruptions here and there. Because I saw sin as punishable, and because I wrongly saw God removing His love from those who sinned; I naturally did the same to others even though I did not want to. I wanted to know for a very long time why I fell into such dire straights and asked God to heal me… but it took a very long time to get to this point in

my journey.
Getting the "law" versus "grace" relationship right in my mind has taken a great weight off my shoulders. Getting the Heaven/Hell/Judgment/Grace relationships right have taken more weight off my shoulders. Thank you Mom, June, Jeff VanVonderen, and Saint Paul for getting me to where I am now walking not to mention all those countless others who have played a role in me getting through to love. I still have schizophrenia… and I still need to learn plenty in this life… so I haven't arrived… but I am persuaded that God will complete the work that He began in me so very long ago. Praise you Jesus!!!

Priorities:

For such a long time I have strived to love by always aiming for the ability to love. I now realize that much of what I did to get where I am is good… but I now need to not think of love as some future destination, but something I can practice day to day where I am planted. Instead of striving to love I need to relax and let God do His work in and through faith in Him. I find it interesting that after a discussion on what the greatest commandment is, Jesus tells the story about the Good Samaritan. He was a normal man who went about his every day business but when there was a call for help nearby he knew his priorities. He cared for those in need. Jesus could have spoken about going to foreign lands and preaching the Gospel to millions if not billions of people and dying a heroic death in such causes. But He seems to indicate that God is just as happy with the little things we do. He cares for everyone.

Before Jesus started His earthly ministry. His disciples heard God the Father say: "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."[121] Since we are sisters and brothers of Jesus, God must look at us in the same way because we too are His children. I therefore don't have to put out with all sorts of good deeds to please God. My acceptance comes because Jesus died on the cross for me. He loves me because He is love. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to me through faith. I abide in Jesus by believing in Him. When I abide in Jesus the fruits of the Spirit become a reality in my life; not by striving or putting forth great efforts to keep or conform to a written law or code. Jesus is the way to love. Not some hidden principles, maxims, or truths. Relationship with God is key to loving others: by walking in His light through faith, having conversations with Him, listening to Him, asking Him questions, weighing what I hear, trusting Him with my issues and His promises, making my desires and anxieties known to Him, making requests, resting in Him and letting Him dwell in me: such is relationship with God. Walking by faith in Jesus will lead to plenty of good fruit. That fruit will bring God much glory. Amen and Amen! Thank you Holy Trinity. I am in your debt forever… and gladly so! Where there is fruit there is joy. And the joy from the Lord is our strength.

Genuine Thankfulness Versus A Fabrication:

Contrived thankfulness isn't thankfulness at all. If we conjure up feelings and call them thankfulness when they actually come from fear of punishment or a belief that thankfulness is expected to make us righteous or save us then the labels of thankfulness for those feelings are a complete bunk, a fabrication, a bondage to darkness, and a lie. God does not demand our thankfulness. Thankfulness flows naturally when we see good things come our way through the thoughtfulness, care, and love of God or others. People who are fabricating a feeling of thankfulness as a condition to fulfill righteousness have

[121] Matthew 3:17, NRSV

sour religion. They are robbing themselves of true joy. And since there is strength in joy, they miss out in the strength department too because the joy of the Lord is our strength. Demanding thankfulness from a person for deeds done for the person is doomed to create strife, anger, rejection, judgments and a hard heart. True love keeps no record of wrongs, cares for those who have no manners, or have a sense of entitlement. We can't give what we have never been given.

So should we only be thankful when things are great?

Being grateful to God even when things aren't easy, when they are difficult or are dark is requested by Him because He knows there is strength in this joy-focused attitude. What is the root or source of joy for us when things aren't going our way? Learning new truths, seeing others with clearer eyes, and seeing myself more and more as being in need of God's Spirit. God does not waste suffering… so gratefulness towards God for future benefits that come from our sufferings is the most powerful motivator of joy. Such joy destroys self-pity!

Not Keeping A Record Of Wrongs:

In my life I have done some pretty horrible things. I have mentioned many of them in this narrative, but there are some private sins that I just don't want to share with anyone. God knows about them very well. But since Jesus said, "For nothing is hidden that will not be disclosed, nor is anything secret that will not become known and come to light."[122] I was very scared and dreaded what other people would think of me if they found out all that I did in the past. I thought what Jesus said had to do with my hidden sins but this is thankfully not in the context of this sentence. If it did have to do with our sins then it would contradict the New Testament Scripture which says: "love keeps no record of wrongs" found in the chapter of First Corinthians 13. I now realize the context of the above quote. Here is the context:

> No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.[123]

Thanks to a footnote found in my NIV Bible I now realize that the context has to do with the Light of the Gospel being revealed: the Good News; and that it will be revealed to all eventually and won't remain hidden forever. And because it has been revealed to me I need to consider how I listen to it in commitment, thought, and deed.

I know that in my Church: when a Priest hears a confession he is not allowed to reveal the identity of the confessor or share anything he has learned to others from the confessor, so that the confessor may remain anonymous. There are very good reasons for this; one being that the policy curtails gossip which hurts people. God is not into hurting others.

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[122] Luke 8:17 NRSV

[123] Luke 8:16-18

Moreover in the New Testament we are encouraged to focus on whatever is good:

> "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.[124]

How can one rejoice when one is dreading judgments, embarrassments, and shame? When God forgives us we have nothing to fear: He has removed our sins as far away as the East is from the West. Replacing the word "love" in the First Corinthians 13:4-7 with "God" because God is Love is most reassuring:

> God is patient, God is kind. God does not envy, God does not boast, God is not proud. *God does not dishonor others*, God is not self-seeking, God is not easily angered, *God keeps no record of wrongs*. God does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. *God always protects*, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.[125]

The words that really speak to me are: "[God] does not dishonor", "[God] keeps no record of wrongs" and "[God] protects."
At the bottom of this was that I want to avoid being shamed now, on judgment day, or thereafter. A quick computer search of the word "shame" just in the Psalms will reveal that God does not shame His children.[126]
In my life I have done some pretty horrible things. I have mentioned many of them in this narrative, but there are some private sins that I just don't want to share with anyone. And through this struggle I realized that no one wants to be shamed. Because I struggled so much to fight off the idea that God might tell others my private sins… I realized that a part of me believed that under the right conditions it maybe OK for me to tell others private sins of those I know. When I realized that this was wrong… The thought came to me: "Do to others as you want them to do to you." If I don't want to be shamed then I can't go around shaming others. A much needed difficult lesson for me to learn. Satan is the accuser of the brethren not God.
My friend Dan commented:

> Love does not desire fear nor shame; it always desires to look you in the

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[124] Philippians 4:4-9, NRSV
[125] NIV
[126] Cf. Psalms 22:5; 34:5; 37:19; 53:5 & 119:46 NRSV

eye and give you a great big hug and then help you move on with a smile on your face and (hopefully) a renewed spring in your step.

I feel a change of attitude taking place within me in how I approach others. Thank you sisters and brothers in Christ! Thank you Holy Trinity!
I now have peace. How long will this last? I don't know…
Thank you Jesus for relieving my fears and continuing to do your work within me, because you love me.

Flotsam & Jetsam:

After awhile I felt more and more confused, more in the power of the evil one. My wife who is quite wise told me to leave my self-help books alone because I already have what it takes to get healthy within me. Thankfully I listened to my wife and began to slowly feel more and more normal as the days progressed. The above quote from my friend Dan drew me… and slowly I moved out of the darkness. I began to think differently. For the first time I wanted people to be happy… a BIG change from wanting them to make me happy by doing what I wanted. To my surprise there is joy in this frame of mind. Thank you Jesus for my wonderful wife; thank you Sophie!

Un-Grace Doesn't Produce Grace:

Holding onto sin prevents God from giving us His empowering presence. By that I mean His grace. Sure He tolerates our bad behaviors, and treats us with His love despite our many sins and so is graceful towards us even when we don't deserver it (we never do). There are areas in my life where I feel great shame. So much so that I am desperate enough to sin: i.e. lie, deceive, protect, and use any magic to cover up what I perceive to be my shame. Lord God what do I need to do to conquer this problem area? It is such a thorn, such a weight to carry.
I spoke to God about it… and I sense Him saying that part of the problem is that I threaten un-forgiveness towards myself from myself as an attempt to kill shame-based behaviors. I think that this is a key to overcoming shameful actions. God can't forgive those who refuse to forgive. God can't forgive the proud. God gives grace to the humble; but opposes the proud. But when we are open to grace through faith… then God's grace flows powerfully through us. I can't use un-grace on myself to motivate acceptable behavior in my eyes and expect God's grace to flow to me in that area.
Thank you Lord Jesus for this insight! I am grateful for all your many benefits!

Authority & Leadership:

I now realize that every disagreement with others in no way means my humanity, dignity, respect, authority, or leadership is being brought into question. Just because somebody refuses to do what I want does not mean that they disrespect me or are evil… they might only disagree with what I want or don't want done on practical, moral or philosophical grounds. They have that right. A leader respects each person that they lead. A leader is one who deals in resolving disputes for the greater good. Often there can be very many disputes and that does not necessarily bring into dispute good leadership. Good leaders are intended to be servants for the greater good. They might not be the best at everything, but they often know how to get the best out of everyone they lead. That does not mean they control their followers. Control or manipulation is not the same as obedience.
Those who are motivated by the lie that unity is achieved through hatred of others will always suspect (wonder about their loyalty; and feel uneasy about) those they are

attempting to lead. Those who follow or lead according to hatred never achieve love. They never feel truly close to each other, they are never united, and never become one with each other. They wander around aimlessly achieving nothing but hurt. They are never truly happy.

If they are attempting to lead others with bad energy they will very well expect their followers to have undying loyalty… but they never believe it… even after many tests… always more is required. Leading for the sake of leading is selfish and is bad energy. Leading because you want the best for your followers is the best reason to lead. If you attempt to manipulate your followers to follow you then that is bad energy. If you attempt to lead and create unity by focusing or basing your unity on the hatred of a person or group of persons then that leadership is based on bad energy.

Realizing these truths or dynamics and rejecting evil and living by love brings freedom not bondage.

Near the beginning of my journey, I recalled the time in my teens when I wanted to be a leader in the Scout Movement. I now know I wanted power back then. A true leader seeks the health, happiness, and wholeness of her or his followers. People who seek power care very little for the wellbeing of their followers. They prefer position. They want to be first. They love to order around those under them. They don't love those in their care. Everything is done out of dominance, manipulation, or hatred.

Some people spot very quickly this negative energy in others if they have it and immediately stand up to it. While others look pass it and see the goodness there too. I guess we are all different. I am grateful for those who spotted my controlling tendencies and stood up to me and also for those who looked by it and saw some good within me too and loved me anyways. Those who spotted it in me let me know something was wrong, something I needed to be told. Whereas those people who accepted me anyways gave me hope and reminded me that my true identity is as a child of God.

Anyone can see that good people often do bad things while bad people often do good things. No one is wholly evil in the absolute sense. Do you want to know what evil is? Acts are the only things that can truly be evil; not persons. Why because we are all stamped with the image of God. God does not create evil, only good. God does not create junk. Every person created by God was intended by God to bear God's image and to eventually be in fellowship with God. That is the destiny God predestined for us, but many reject Him.

For most of my life I was compulsively drawn to see my enemies as worthy of my hared. I usually hardened my heart towards those I did not like. I saw them as evil because I deemed them not loyal to me; my god, or my causes. If they rejected me I would hate them. Because I saw them as evil it reinforced my hatred for them. For a long time I did not know that this was in me. But later on I knew that my attitudes were wrong but perplexed as how to deal with them… this mess was so well rooted and ingrained in my mind that I did not know why I did what I did and how it worked; but I knew that Jesus could free me from this evil growth within me. The road to achieving the goal of freedom was long and progress along it was slow. If I never persevered I would never have understood it and have a fighting chance to conquered it with God's help through my faith in Jesus.

Because of my schizophrenia, and also because I thought this bad way in my mind and heart for such a long time… I have a tendency to revert back to this unwholesome

energy. Being mindful and open to God's Spirit warning and directing me to repent from this evil is my goal to follow. I realize that I can't go through life trying to not do stuff… I need to go through life focused on bearing good fruit. Fruit that Jesus commissioned me to bear. Scripture clearly states that I need to renew my mind. This is a process that will never be finished in this life. Thank you Jesus for bringing me this far! Thank you for loving me Father God! And thanks Holy Spirit for never abandoning me!
Today on Tuesday, August 2, 2011 I had a different opinion than another person on a practical matter, but I was able to dialogue without feeling fear, without being harsh in speech, and actually getting to an agreement where we both were happy. Gee, life is getting good! Thank you Lord God for enriching my life and helping me to enrich those I am meeting in my journey in ways not possible until now!

What did I learn today August 10, 2011?

People who attempt to lead through dark energy take everyone's good advice as a threat to their leadership and self-esteem. Being able to take good advice is a sign of humility. Proud people can't take good advice.
Denying or underplaying another person's discomfort, compassion, caring, worrying, gentleness, concerns, opinions, wants, or desires is a sign of having hardened one's heart. Making the decision to care for all people's sufferings or to tolerate all people's stances one issue at a time is key. I can do this with Jesus' help who is the only way (for those who have either accepted Him or rejected Him) to becoming an authentic compassionate, caring, humble and helpful person.
Wanting others: Any person or any pets to fit into one's boxes is rooted in being selfish and results in attempts to control, and manipulate subjects of interests. Slowly conquering the controlling spirit by saying no to it with Jesus help and leading is key to being set free and setting others free.
How does one achieve such high ideals? Faith in Jesus, and not focusing on rules.

Faith & knowing

Looking for details that one believes are there and aren't actually there will actually keep one from seeing the obvious when attempting to learn or understand something new. When this obsession is all that happens then it is a learning disability or at the very least a bad strategy. Looking for that invisible knowledge on which to base and understand new concepts is doomed to failure if the new concepts are simple and stare one right in the face. I need to abandon this pattern of thinking. I know that this began when I began my transfer from the Faculty of Education to the Faculty of Science at the U of A. I now know I was missing a solid foundation in real mathematic theory back then because of where I began my studies and I struggled much to find that foundation. I was attempting to re-invent the mathematical wheel. This strategy found it's way into other areas in my life. Why did this happen? Because I thought I could get to the unknown by arguing from known facts I only needed to uncover that still eluded me. This can be a valid strategy, but when taken to extremes spells defeat. This sort of extreme-strategy lends it self to conspiracy theories and can blind one to what is obvious to others. This bad strategy steals one's common sense... it is best to jettison this strategy ASAP.
Looking too close to things keeps us from gaining proper perspective... perspective that allows understanding to grow between the details. Being too detail-focused instead of perspective-focused can rob one from understanding concepts learning new ideas and

accomplishing tasks both simple and complex. Knowing when to be detailed focused and big picture focused is key to success. This is what I am now aiming to learn.

Sometimes:

When somebody does a wrong against us the prudent thing to do is say we don't like it and would like it if it is no longer done. Instead of telling them "it was a moral wrong; that it is a sin; that it is evil; that needs to be repented from, and that they are going to Hell if it is not repented from." The latter quotation borders on judgment and condemnation not grace. The former strategy is grace orientated... And is done from kindness in a warm way. Jesus told us to not judge or condemn. The first way keeps us from judging or condemning others.

Territory Vs. Meekness:

People who don't want to look weak in their own eyes or seen so by others carry dark energy with them and so are territorial. They will have to humble themselves in order to practice meekness. This is done by being able to take good and bad advice for what it is worth, to be teachable by all: the small; the young; beginners; lay people; amateurs, and non-professionals. People who crave authority or try to hold onto it can't practice meekness. Meek people want what is best for those they meet... they aren't focused on power struggles or poor self-esteem issues. Instead they give because they are un-selfish. They aren't lazy and are willing to roll up their sleeves and help out in good causes. They aren't worried about position for they know they have worth even when other people act or say otherwise.

On Being First:

Yes… I wanted to be first in many ways early in my life. Who doesn't want to be first at something? It isn't necessarily a crime. Why do we hold competitions: in the ranks of professionals and amateurs: in academics, arts, and sports? Why do we compete with each other? Some do so from bad motives while others do so from good motives. A good motive can be: to improve, to grow, to achieve, and to become the best "myself" I can become.

I loved the number: "one" as a child and I remember seeing a rugby match on TV in South Africa shortly before we immigrated to Canada where I wanted the player with the number "1" jersey to be the best and really rooted for him.

Do I still want to be number one? In many ways: yes. Do I give others the nod to be number one? Sometimes: "yes" and some times: "no". Often in the past and for some time now I have noticed that those I have recognized to be first in something I often did become envious, critical, and judgmental towards them because of their achievements. In other words I have not loved them, and wanted their positions or ranks.

I now know that being number one is not always a bad thing. If we seek it more than anything else: including love then it has become an idol. I have no right to judge a person's motives one way or another. I don't know anyone's motives. I have no right to sniff out sin in other people's lives.

Those we compete with make us better than what we were unless we land up envying them.

I have also judged many people who have taken up leadership roles on their own initiatives. Being a leader is also a way in which we are somehow number one. I know that it is wrong for me to have judged any person who seeks leadership. Seeking leadership can be both good and bad; and motives can often be mixed.

Prayer: Dread Or Relief?

During my Dark Journey I would oscillate back and forth between intense burdened petitions and no prayer at all for others trying to avoid the burdens I felt. I did so because I felt it such a battle, such a negative weight, such an obligation to petition God on behalf of others. Moreover, my prayers took more of the form of tattletales. I would tell God what other people's sins were and ask Him to save them from them. I did not enjoy petitioning God for others in this way. God gradually showed me that it was up to Him to convict people of their sins; not me. God also began showing me that I need not focus on other people's sins in prayer or out of prayer. He knew all about them already. He wanted me to be "love" and "fruit" focused. He wanted me to see the good in others instead of sniffing out their dirty laundry. The former is grace focused whereas the latter is law focused. God showed me that I did not have to view prayer as a heavy burden to carry and dread. I am His child after all, and He doesn't want me to carry heavy burdens by myself or at all. Prayer is speaking to God, and telling Him what is on my heart or mind. It is about giving Him my burdens… and the burdens of others. When petitionary prayers are done the burdens should land up in God's hands not mine. I should feel free! He is all powerful… not I! Prayer is giving up our burdens for others to God so that He can carry them and bring good out of them. Now when I feel a burden I carry it to God in prayer who relieves me from it. Prayer ought to be a relief… not a dread. What a relief for me. Now I can pray again… and it will be a joy instead of a gigantic weight! Thank you Sophie! Thank you Jesus! Thank you Brad! Thank you Mom and Dad!

To Care Or Not To Care?

A little while back God showed me that I ought not vow "un-forgiveness" towards myself if I were to shame myself in front of people. And I found freedom in that one area, only to lapse into bondage again not because of my vow, but because I decided to not care about that particular issue anymore. Why? Because: to stay "caring" was so difficult: it became a heavy burden. When I "cared" it was so easy to want to threaten un-forgiveness on myself… but if I "didn't care" then the burden seemed to disappear, but the unwanted behavior came back and that seemed like less of a burden to me. Now that I know how to pray more properly I can carry this burden of "caring for this issue" to the Lord in prayer. Thank you Lord Jesus! Amen!

Dealing With An Ugly Attitude:

Today (Saturday, September 10, 2011) I remembered going to a weekday Mass many years ago that I expected to last no more than a half hour. But when the Priest launched into a Liturgy that promised to last much too long for my liking my heart grew hard, black and angry. I never dealt with that dark attitude/anger back then. But today's homily at Mass had the theme: "resentments and forgiveness." And I realized after the homily that the same dark energy/or bad attitude was still within me. I also remember having the same attitude towards a Priest on a doctrinal/Church related practice that was resolved a long time ago. Fighting this dark energy of having to have others fall in line with my every whim or petty or anal likes or dislikes had been most uncomfortable for me for a very long time. But today I began my battle in earnest to deal with this dark energy. Yes I have been a very selfish person for as long as I can remember and God is slowly leading me to repent from it one thing or step at a time. Selfishness is a demonic stronghold in my life and bears the fruit of judgmental-ism, intolerance, abrasiveness and blackness.

Today I was reminded again that if Jesus only had me to die for He would do so gladly. God deeply and compassionately loves me. Amen, and Amen!

Deserved Or Forgiven?

Many yeas ago I was visiting my brother in Alberta and we walked down to the local convenient store to buy something. On our way back home two intoxicated young men approached us. They had a bone to pick with my brother and they tried to intimidate and threaten us. Things got out of hand and a fight broke out between one of them and myself. I landed up breaking my thumb. Later on after I renewed my walk with Jesus I felt guilty for my part in the confrontation. I thought I deserved the injury and that it was God's way of teaching me a lesson. But now I know God has forgiven my part in the fight… and that God does not hold grudges; moreover He is forgiving, compassionate, kind, not petty, and He wants to bless us. He wants to bring healing to all of us even if we think we deserve our injuries. As long as we think we deserve our injuries there is a BIG chance we won't have faith for healing. Thank you Jesus for leading me through the storms of life to this increase in peace. Amen, and Amen!

Supernatural Love Starts With Accepting The Truth Of God:

With each spiritual breakthrough (uncovering sin and repenting with Jesus' help) I would think that I'd finally won through to love. But then eventually each breakthrough would dry up. There is a place for repenting with God's help and I fully support this and will do so when it is required. But I know that so long as I see myself other than the way God sees me I will live out the dark image I perceive myself to be and not bear the good fruit that comes from Jesus. I have come to the conclusion that I have to believe what God says about me in the Bible and act out of that instead of the negativity rooted in and lies spoken to me by Satan's kingdom. For some time now whenever I saw myself falling short somehow, I'd say, "I guess I'm not abiding in Jesus". Or I'd only say: "I'm abiding in Jesus" when I saw good behavior. I was always looking for good fruit or more to the point whether I was obeying the rules. But the Bible says that so long as I believe in Jesus I am abiding in Him provided I am not in a state of mortal sin. I can't go by only what I see. I go by faith. Jesus said I am both salt and light in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus said in John 15 that I am abiding in Him and I do so because I believe in Him. Saint Paul said that Jesus became sin (think mutilated) so that I could become the righteousness (think health and healed) of God. Point is: I can't let my position be determined by my actions: I need to let my actions be determined by my position that is a result of God's grace won by Jesus' life, death and resurrection. I am in the Kingdom of Light. I am seated up in Heaven with Jesus. I am a child of God. Jesus died for me. Jesus rose for me. Jesus loves me. I don't do good deeds or bear good fruit so I'll abide in the True Vine: Jesus. I abide in Jesus by believing in Him and so bear good fruit. I abide by faith in Jesus. I don't perform well or righteously so that I can earn a place in the True Vine or earn God's approval. Abiding is a gift through faith not earned by good works from the Law.

This approach is identity focused, not action focused. Actions do come from this approach: good actions plus plenty of peace, joy, confidence and self-esteem.

Friday, September 30, 2011: Moving Along:

As we gradually move from one stage of spiritual enlightenment to another, different battles will present them selves in each stage. Such battles strengthen us and so we grow in dependence on God if we fight and conquer them in His strength. There is only one-

way to the Father: Jesus. Openness to Jesus, asking Him what He thinks about our problems… and listening to Him… not expecting instantaneous answers or solutions all the time but waiting for God to talk when we are in the right frame of mind. Right now I know I carry way too much stress within me at this time while at work and while at home. Should I do yoga? I like my dog walks Lord Jesus. I have learned a lot about control, freedom, leadership, learning, following and obedience through Mandela our dog. I just don't know how to slow down at work at this time. I am so stressed out and my body is feeling it: yes I am feeling it. Lord God I know that before I went off on that wild tangent a short time ago you were teaching me about being more selfless or less selfish. I think that is where the battle lies within me. No matter how weak I feel right now in this area I think I need to re-focus my energies in this area. Yeah like seeking to make others happy.

Wisdom & PRIDE

Because of recent back problems I felt that perhaps God was trying to communicate with me through my pain. I then remembered a passage from Proverbs that seemed to promise health to my flesh and refreshment to my bones under certain conditions. And that is what I wanted, so I looked it up and found:

> Trust in the LORD with all your heart
> and lean not on your own understanding;
> in all your ways acknowledge him,
> and he will make your paths straight.
> Do not be wise in your own eyes;
> fear the LORD and shun evil.
> This will bring health to your body
> and nourishment to your bones.[127]

I was surprised to see that God linked my pride with my poor and painful back (I am not incriminating anyone else just myself). With the Holy Spirit's help I realized that I still saw myself as wise and that I needed to deal a deathblow to it through repentance. Such repentance is not a one-time event. Fighting pride is a daily battle. I also realized that when I'm wise in my own eyes I become a pompous expert when it comes to everyone else's observable behavior too. When I see myself as wise I become critical and judgmental and hateful towards others on small stuff and big stuff too and I become petty, abusive, resentful, and devoid of peace within. This would describe me to a 'T' for a long time even though I repressed it not wanting to hurt others. I wanted to be gentle and meek… and felt very guilty about my hate filled attitudes but was at a loss on how to deal with it until I spoke to God about it today on Saturday October 1, 2011, and He gave me the above passage and insight. God is distant from the proud and near the humble. If I say I am humble I am proud, and when I say I am proud I am being humble: it is a paradox.

Focus:

Whatever you focus on can eat up your world... Focus on your blessings and you will have joy... Focus on your difficulties and you will have depression, darkness, worry,

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[127] Proverbs 3:5-8

anxiety, stress, and all you will be thinking about is poor you: you will be full of self pity. You will give less and less of yourself to others... and be a poor witness for God's Kingdom. Thank you June for your encouragement! Amen, and Amen!

A Prayer Request:

I know that when it comes to having faith with other people's faith in God along with their commitment I flounder in weakness or plenty of doubt. Faith comes from you my God. Please grant me such faith so I can be fearless and assertive and encourage those you want me to feed like sheep. I ask for this in Jesus' name, amen. I know that I have questioned the sincerity and truth and character of most people I met as I grew up starting after I was rejected by others. I was a scoffer who criticized others behind their backs accusing them of evil and vain imaginings, motives, goals and activity. Lord God I am sorry for my pompous attitudes, my jaded, and cynical out looks towards those I meet. Please restore your image within me in Jesus' name I pray oh God... Amen & Amen!

Thank you oh beloved God. I now realize that I did what I did out of rejection, hurt, and pride... Thinking I was better than those who excluded me. Forgive me Lord God, and I now forgive in Jesus name all those people who deliberately or fictionally rejected me as I grew up. And I embrace that pain and offer it up to you to heal. Indeed, I landed up doing what I accused others of doing... I was a hypocrite.

Thank you Lord Jesus for loving me and not giving up on me like I did so many times. A true leader can believe in the goodness, ability, and completion of tasks of those under their authority. Therefore they can encourage, hearten, spur, develop, and nurture others who they are meant to lead. Such leaders project the right kind of energy and those under their care feel it and follow it.

A big part of repairing this attitude is to be able to trust others again or for the first time. I remember being at the pool next to our house in South Africa and not trusting my Dad when he threw me up in the air while in the water. I have not been a very trusting person most of my life… I was a person of very little faith. Not trusting others destroys intimacy. It weakens relationships. It steals from what they can be, and it takes away from the building up that healthy community brings to its members.

Vowing not to trust needs to be replaced by trust. Lord God I renounce my distrust of others in Jesus' name. But who does one trust? The ones whom my mind and gut informed by the Holy Spirit say I should trust.

This trust also has to do with me trusting Jesus, the Church, and the Bible. If I whole heartedly trust these, then I won't be afraid of sharing what I believe about them with others, and when disagreements on doctrine occur I won't be afraid of pulling out all the reasons I believe what I believe. But love ought to be my goal; not being right. I am committed to what I believe, and I don't need others to believe what I do in order for me to love them.

Not wanting to trust other people's opinions or faiths or beliefs will hamper my trust in my own beliefs… because I am ultimately dependent on other people's input for much of what I believe.

Moreover, if I doubt so much so strongly (lacking trust) I will start to doubt my senses, my thinking, my memory, my identity, my goals, and my direction? And when I can't trust what's coming at me then I may land up not being able to latch onto much stuff, ideas, messages, memories, and commitments that well. And there is more:

More Good Fruit:

I now realize that when I gave up my trust in others I also lost my compassion for them. I became unable to sympathize or empathize with them cause I didn't trust anyone anymore. I treated them more like enemies than friends.
When one vows to not trust… one gets suspicious about others and has difficulty seeing the best in others.
In giving up my vow to not trust I gained back my ability to feel compassion, empathize, and sympathize with others. I also find that I relate on a deeper level with others now, and that ought not be surprising, and I am very grateful for this. Thank you Lord my God.
However:
Yes… however I find that when I do make a judgment (harden my heart towards somebody such a celebrity, a representative of a visible minority, etc.…) without realizing the gravity of what I have done, I get really insecure around others thinking that they are judging me… when in reality I am the one who can't stop judging, I am hard on myself, and I am just a general mess. When this happens the light within me recedes, my eyes grow evil, I am unable to love, and I feel like a marvelous wreck or a gutted robot.
Monday, November 7, 2011:
I wish I had of wanted somebody to confide in when I was rejected at such a young age by my peers. I know my reaction to being rejected did get fueled in part by selfishness, pride, insecurity, lack of trust, and shallowness that got nursed into a grudge, and a cynical and judgmental attitude towards others. I had lost faith in others, and became a pouter who was a coward when it came to making requests from others for fear of further rejection. I could have gone to my Dad, Mom, or even my God… but my pride prevented me. I now know that being rejected by others does hurt, and that there are healthy ways of dealing with it. I just did not follow those healthy ways back then.
But I now know that I can turn to those healthy ways:
Lord God please come and live in my heart (wherever there is emptiness) in new ways: Please live in me, saturate my dryness, make yourself felt, be felt as a presence, be the source of goodness in me, the Light by which I live, move, work, play, and rest in. Direct my path, and keep me devoted to your plans for good, meaning, hope, and prosperity. Thank you Lord Jesus, Father God, and Holy Spirit. Amen, and amen!
Saturday, November 12, 2011:
Today is the start to a new era in my spiritual discernment. I am realizing just how selfish I was and have been all this time without realizing or aware of much of it. I know now that when I am difficult, high maintenance, irritable, (on the edge of) pouting, and disappointed to the point of sulking, then I am definitely seeking my own happiness above all else, and I am being selfish. Thing is I just wasn't aware of the roots… but now thanks to God I see the roots and they are being yanked out of my heart/mind… cause I have the power to say no to them for the first time in a long time. Thank you Father God, Lord Jesus Christ, and Holy Spirit! How does one put an end to self-seeking? Desire to make others happy before making one-self happy. Freedom from self is freedom from sin.
A New Approach:
No more focusing on rigid systematic theology by me (such is the case for theologians, and academics...). No more aiming for the perfect answers, just shooting from the hip into the heart with clumsy language. Nothing meant to impress, but only to bless.
Still Struggling With Schizophrenia:

There are often times where for even for a few hours I experience some peace. But there are often times when I am under dire dark demonic attacks through my schizophrenia. People without schizophrenia may think I'm whacked out of my mind in reading stuff from this Website. But at this stage… truths enshrined in the Scriptures and Sacred Tradition and taught by the Church are under violent and sinister attacks in my mind. The force of their attack is to say: "See you hold this and that to be true… but look you don't have love for those who are different (just examine your feelings). Therefore you need to jettison those supposed truths because they don't lead to love." But I have come this far… I have seen the Father's heart… and no demon through my schizophrenia can make me renounce what God has taught me.

Thursday, November 17, 2011

Yes I have made progress thus far in my spiritual walk. Thank you Father God. Not everything is squandered. Yesterday I realized that not all the emotions, feelings, and thoughts that go through my head are mine (as compared to a healthy person who has no schizophrenia). For me many of the emotions, thoughts and feelings in my head belong to at least one demon. These thoughts and emotions or feelings are strongest (most threatening) when I think they have their basis in reality or some moral defect of mine, and also when I think everything is originating from a healthy mind (which I need to remind myself all the time is not mine at this juncture).

How do I get to this place of embracing this deception and danger? I get there when I attempt to live out of my emotions in a certain way, not truth. This way is motivated by me seeking to feel good (to feel pleasure, and happiness) above all else. For a healthy person living out of emotions at one time or another may be acceptable… but for me it is a BIG mistake, a BAD strategy, and a path to becoming slave to lie after lie that leads away from Jesus.

This dynamic, this situation, this place where I find myself is not an easy cross to carry. But I accept it now believing that Jesus will use it to make me strong and more moving instead of being weak at acts of love.

The Peace Of God:

Early on during my Dark Journey I experience the Holy Spirit's presence as He attempted to calm my fears. Later on there were times when God revealed Himself to me in some un-mistakably awesome ways. But as I continued to get healthier I wondered if I'd recognize God's presence when it came… and I also wondered when that would be. Then on Wednesday, November 23, 2011 I heard Brad Jersak talk a bit about experiencing God. I now realize that the peace I do feel is from God… and when God manifest Himself in other ways… that is His business. Either way I am not getting the short end of the stick. Thank you Lord God for the peace I do feel. Amen, and Amen!

Emotions & Their Roots (Sunday, November 27, 11):

In the past little while with God's help I have been putting names to certain roots or foundations behind the huge (sad, melancholy, negative, or sorrowful) emotions I felt, that for a long time overwhelmed and ruled over me. I can now see my pouting rooted in my selfishness, jealousy, fear of rejection, and pride. I also tend to feel disrespected when I'm in conflict with others even when I shouldn't be. I am conquering (with Jesus' help) the impact these roots and emotions have on the decisions and commitments I am now making. I know that when I feel insecure or unwanted and am wallowing in it… others distances them selves from me. Whereas when I go by faith, ignore and refrain from the

wallowing and pouting (and therefore say no to those weak and evil roots) others are drawn to me. Many of the negative emotions I feel these days are overwhelming (because I focused on them so much in the past and so they grew and grew with their roots and negativity and so I eventually tried to stuff or repress them). I also begin to see that because I was repressing so many negative emotions within myself I did not want to feel other people's sad or negative emotions. But as I begin to explore my feelings' nuances (and seeing what is behind them) I am growing in strength, discernment, and power over them because the truth sets us free just like Jesus said it does. I sure have a long ways to go! Amen and Amen!

There was a lot of sad music I loved to listen to for so many years. But as time wore on I could no longer relate to or enjoy that particular music as before. I now believe that God wants me to celebrate that music on a different foundation or level. Not one based on self-pity, jealousy, anger, selfishness, or fear and pride. Also when I listened to music in the past it was always about ME. Now I know it can be about anyone. Thank you Lord God for these insights… I love you very much because you first loved me!

Emotions Continued (Monday, November 28, 2011):

There is not just one generic kind of sadness. There are sadness-es that are based in pouting the loss of selfish desires when it comes to certain opportunities, goals or accomplishments. Then there are sadness-es that are legitimate… ones based in justices being denied. The former will lead to addictions when not dealt with correctly because we weren't made to experience sadness day in and day out. That sadness requires relief. Either the relief comes from repenting from our selfishness (having our own ways) or we nurse them with addictions. As for legitimate sadness, if we get angry without resolving it, then that will turn into an addiction too unless we forgive the perpetrators for their injustices.

If this reasoning is correct then my remaining addictions are on their way to being dead. I don't know but perhaps I need to go back and repent in faith from all my current to past selfish actions, selfish decisions, selfish desires and selfish commitments. At least I hope that will be the case! Perhaps working the Twelve Steps in this light will help? Thank you Lord God for sticking by me through my trials. Amen, and Amen!

Repenting From Evil In The Heart:

Genetically we aren't evil. Yet evil is in us in the form of darkness in our hearts. We can do good because God has put goodness in our hearts and we do evil because there is evil stored in our hearts too. What does this evil look like? It is darkness, a lack of light, or it is a selfish vacuum... and although it promises happiness (through getting things) its promises are empty. It is a constant sustainer of anger or sadness that leads to depression and addictions. Selfish commitments made in the past need to be repented from with faith in Jesus. Recognizing our selfishness for what it is is very important and repenting from it in faith one obstacle at a time will bring freedom to love and generosity to all. This repenting from anger and selfishness will bring joy and freedom from sadness/depression and addictions. I am finding this to be true in my life.

Judging:

I am finding that as I deal with my selfishness I am less judgmental. Thank God. But I still have a long ways to go. I still fall into judging others from what I call aggressive Religions (as if mine isn't). The only strength I find is the story about the woman caught in adultery that Jesus tells her accusers: If you are without sin you may throw the first

stone. Boy does this convict me. Jesus said for us to not judge or condemn. We are to treat aliens the way we want to be treated.

Rejection:

Today (Tuesday, December 6, 2011) I realized that I am not being rejected just because my message is being rejected. There is a BIG difference. When I interpret another's anger as rejection of me I am less likely to confront them… I will feel weak… and I will never be assertive… and I will walk around as a lame animal. Therefore the energy I give off will make people think they can run over me. I will be insecure, and I'll get trampled over, and never have as deep relationships as I could. I'll do things out of fear of being rejected instead of wanting to only bless others. I have gone through all of this over and over again. Thank God it has come to an end!

Super-Natural VS. Natural Sight:

I need to accept the following words spoken by Jesus:

'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.[128]

I need to because they are so counter-intuitive. My mind has embraced an eye of an eye and a tooth for a tooth mentality for such a long time… that it needs to be re-programmed. I can't do this by myself, but I know I can do so with Jesus' help. Amen! If I don't embrace this attitude I become territorial, judgmental, petty, and legalistic. I don't understand this saying from Jesus in my natural self. It only makes sense when I embrace it with faith, because if I don't then I am not able to love others at all.

Attitude:

Focusing on negative stuff dries up joy. Drying up joy means drying up strength and hope. Drying up strength and hope dries up love. Hence negativity dries up love. Negativity comes from the devil and his demons. Putting on the Helmet of Salvation does not only have to do with going to Heaven eventually, but it has to also do with Jesus not abandoning us in the here and now, in the past, and in the future because He did not abandon us during His Passion. Therefore putting off negativity is key to living the abundant life.

I am realizing that I did decide a really long time ago that I would only be happy when I am able to and actually loving people like God promised me so many years ago. That means I disregarded for some time all that God has done for me and will do for me. It also means that I have minimized the things others have done for me with the motive to make me happy. I guess I need to get this straightened out. Jesus is the Good News. I used to celebrate Him… and I will celebrate Him from now on. I am certain that there is not one lonesome maxim that will bring happiness all by itself. I guess I need to be open to listening to God and making requests as are wanted and needed. Negative stuff has its origin in the dark side. God's wish is for me to be happy; whereas Satan wants me to feel horrible to the point of self-loathing.

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[128] Matthew 5: 38-42, NRSV

Rejection & Love
Fears of being abandoned can nudge us to making the decision to not love, not desire, or get attached to the person(s) we are in relationship with in the hope of not getting hurt. The only way to dissolve the insecurity is to go into danger. That means to abandon vows to not trust and to put up walls, and instead to love more deeply... In loving deeper we will feel pain when we are ever rejected... But those who reject us will know there wasn't anything lacking in our love. Surprisingly... Fear of rejection spawns rejection; whereas commitment to love creates security. Perfect love casts out all fear.
Learning A Hard Lesson:
Going through the above cleansing there were millions of times that things seemed to be going backwards. But I persevered anyways in faith with Jesus' help. So even when things seemed to be going backwards I now know God was doing His work within me.
Monday, January 2, 2012:
A while ago my wife told me that she did not treat me as though I had schizophrenia. That scared me a little, but then I became glad. Yesterday I realized that I still treated myself as though I had schizophrenia… and I decided to stop it, to stop limiting myself by it's negative aspects… and to treat myself as though I were healthy. I am therefore no longer viewing myself as a victim of evil spirits or my own life choices. I am viewing myself with potential, with hope, with promise, and I am no longer defining my life by my negative schizophrenia symptoms.
I am not demanding that my music do this or that for me… I just accept it for what it is… and land up enjoying it a whole lot more despite my illness. This by-passes the mentality that I had for a long time of saying that I'd only declare myself to be healthy if I could experience my favorite music like I used to do before I became ill with schizophrenia. People change and so see and experience music, stories, and art differently as they get older.
Old wine skins vs. New Wine skins:
Jesus said:

> No one sews a piece of un-shrunk cloth on an old cloak, for the patch pulls away from the cloak, and a worse tear is made. Neither is new wine put into old wineskins; otherwise, the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins are destroyed; but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved.'[129]

The old life (old wine skin) needs to be abandoned completely. The new life (new wine skin) needs to be wholly embraced. We can't pick and choose what we are to incorporate into our lives from the new life: adding one or two good things and leaving the rest un-changed is not wise. If we mix old with new then everything can be lost if there is no movement to growth in commitment to Jesus. We need to do away with the old works (old wineskins or old attitudes) that the devil spun into our lives with our permissions. And to fully embrace the life Jesus offers us.
If we have an old cloak and don't want to trade it in for a new one, and only want to patch it up, then we are committed more to the old life than the new life. Wanting a new life more than the old one enables us with God's power to discard the old cloak (old life)

[129] Matthew 9:16-17, NRSV

and to receive a new cloak (new life). This is a process. It is motivated by slowly growing in commitment to following Jesus through faith. This is the case when we want God's will more than anything else and are willing to pay for it through suffering.

Listening To The Voice Of God Better Than Before:

I have had a lot of success in recognizing God's voice when I ask Him questions especially since I got fitted with a good foundation from Brad Jersak's book: "Can You Hear Me?" But when I am really attached to something, I want to manipulate, change, or argue with what I hear in my mind. This is a tendency that I embraced and struggled with… but now recognize as something I need to jettison or say no to. God is most easily approached when I believe He is good.

Truth Wins Out Over Lies Everytime:

Expose any lie with truth, and truth is like light and the lies will vanish like darkness. Am I being tempted to judge? Is my judging others based on a supposed lack of justice coming my way? Do I believe I am getting the short end of the stick? Am I believing demonic lies about the motives of others? Don't I realize that I can't see into the minds and hearts of others? Am I still using: "Oh… so they are like that" thinking when I harden my heart in the worst and darkest sense? Yes… but not all the time. I am making progress with Jesus' help. Truth always wins out. I got to find the right truth to fight off the lies from the enemy. If I build my attitudes, thinking, and actions on Jesus' words then my judging will evaporate. It can't get any simpler. The truth is that I don't know the attitudes, beliefs, judgments, blindness-es, clarity, understanding, consciences, motives, thinking, reasoning, examples and intents of those I see at church in the pew, or on the street, or in my own house. I need to remember that… if I am going to stop judging people who do things I disagree with.

Tonight I got serious about my judging problem. And the Lord pointed out a judgment I made a while back… and whoosh it washed away with His help. But during Communion I had so many negative thoughts enter my mind anyways… it was a torrent… a gush of lies and judgments and accusations that tried to push me away from God, the Church, and my brothers and sisters. Demons are behind all the accusations I hear in my mind. Not all thoughts in my mind come from me. If they are negative and hateful then they are rooted in the kingdom of darkness. Just because evil ideas come into my head does not mean I am a bad person. Do I give into them sometimes? Yes… but not always. Sometimes they are so powerful, overwhelming, insidious and tenacious. Worse than picking out weeds in a fertile field… they come at me so quickly… I don't know what to do with them at first. Or they seem to agree with me so much except I know they lead away from love and so I don't want them.

I also realized that judging is just as prevalent in my life as lies used to be.

I am learning how to love people. It is a slow process. In learning to love one person at a time… and so I am slowly learning to love everyone because we are all made in the image of God. I have a sword… I need to pick it up and fight with it against the devils who wish to lead me astray. My sword is the word of God.

No Longer Beating Myself Up With Satan's Help!

I have picked up my sword and it feels strong; the sword being the truth of God's Holy Word. I am having confidence in the word because it has proved true through all my trials. I don't have to be ashamed of it in the presence of anyone. The word is also like seed. It grows us and positions us for spiritual prosperity. It removes the demonic

strongholds, and breaks the chains of powerless-ness, of shame, of condemnation, of negativity in our lives. If we don't have negativity in our lives we can't beat ourselves up anymore.
I did not expect it so soon that I'd need to use my sword in another area of my life after going through so many trials, darkness-es, and intrigues victoriously. Those victories are a result of God's grace, my perseverance, and me believing the words written in the Bible in those areas of my life where I was being tested. The storms did come (many more may come). I have driven the remaining darkness out of my life with faith in what God's word says about me, about God, and the devil.
Satan can put so much bullshit into one's head, and if one is not careful one will think and believe that it is a reflection of oneself and one may possibly own those ideas and as a result feel guilty, angry, judgmental, critical, negative, intolerant, and proud; and so possibly give up. We are designed to love, be joyous, be gracious, be kind, be encouraging, and to be giving… but if we don't fight off Satan's air attacks we will feel defeated and possibly give up so that Satan neutralizes us or wins the war for our souls. We need to fight the good fight, because it is winnable! Thank you Jesus for showing the way.

Tuesday, January 10, 2012:

Today I realized that the kids I am helping Sophie my wife teach in Prep Classes are much like the kids who rejected me in South Africa when I was a child. Looking back… can I really let such kids determine my self worth, my self-esteem, and my destiny since then and up to today? Absolutely NOT!
They are so erratic, simple, full of energy, draining, and full of ignorance. They have some smarts, some understanding, and some kindness… but don't have the maturity that adults' respect and aim for. They are not fully developed. They have potential though. They see simple things that we are often blind to… yet we see so much more that they are blind to. Their opinions are simple, embellished, and most of the time can't be taken seriously. Yet they are loved, cared for, have worth, and are teachable. They know nothing with deep certainty; yet they easily believe the absurd and sometimes the best. They barely think logically. They have passion. They can't be expected to hold too much responsibility. They celebrate little achievements as we do BIG ones. They are hungry for love. They don't want to be ignored. They seek attention. They have wants and needs. They want to be seen as special, unique, cherished and spoiled deeply. Most things they set their hearts on they pursue dogmatically for brief moments until something easier comes along.
I forgive them with Jesus' help… I forgive with Jesus' help myself for being a prisoner of my own pride, my own selfishness, and my own disillusionment. I repent with Jesus' help from giving to those who rejected me so much power over my future and whom I decided to be and where that led me. I take the power that I gave them back with Jesus' help. I was one of them in the fullest sense; my pride and selfishness blinded me from seeing that. I forgive myself with Jesus' help. Amen & Amen!
A dramatic fruit I am experiencing now that this has been prayed through is: a wall has come down between me and my brother and sister. It is like I am seeing them for the first time… and it feels really good. Also a wall has come down between me and pretty well everyone I know or meet. What a relief.

Jettisoning Another burden:

The parable of the Good Samaritan has been a long time on my mind. And in the process it did become a burden with devils using malice to suck the joy and love out of me that was meant to motivate me into becoming a Good Samaritan. I wanted to be a Good Samaritan… but my strategy in getting there was not by simply abiding in Jesus through faith (and trusting Him to energize and motivate me in that direction), but instead my strategy was one of self-flagellation together with a rule to aim for. In this vein I drew a picture of the Good Samaritan and began to paint it as a prayer that one day I would do just that. But it became a far-off lofty goal that I increasingly felt powerless to perform in the many small ways that presented themselves to me each day. When Jesus expects us to do something He always gives us the grace to do it even when it is difficult. Jesus has everyone's best interest at heart; mine included. I have decided to leave this situation in Jesus' hands. I now trust Him to motivate me. I trust Him to guide me. I trust Him to save me. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. He is patient. He is my Good Shepherd. After this revelation… I briefly lost my footing and love. Then the Holy Spirit let me know that I don't have to sustain a loving attitude all by myself. I can let Him carry me. God wants me to rest in Him through faith.

Hope?

I now realize that in the past I had very little faith in believing that conflicts or disagreements would be resolved. I therefore battered myself within until there were resolutions. Now I have faith and remind myself that things can, and do get better; and therefore I don't have to be hard on myself.

Grace & Forgiveness:

During my Evangelical days I learned that grace in part was un-merited favor. This is correct. I also learned that forgiveness meant treating an agent of hurt as though they had never done anything wrong. I now see this as a twisted truth. Forgiveness does not mean: It is OK; I'm OK, you're OK, and we are OK. The following comes from the Clarion Journal[130] and was written by Brad Jersak after listening to a First Nation's speaker:

1**. Forgiveness is NOT saying "It's okay".** It is NOT okay what happened. Abuse and oppression are never written off as acceptable. Forgiveness must not minimize the wrong-doing or the damage done by any injustice.
2. **Forgiveness is NOT saying "I'm okay".** I may need years to go through the healing process. Genuine forgiveness does not ask anyone to skip any stages of the grieving and healing process.
3. **Forgiveness is NOT saying "You're okay".** The offender is not simply off the hook. They still need to walk through repentance and all its consequences, often including retribution, rehabilitation, restitution and restoration.
4. **Forgiveness is NOT saying "We're okay".** Forgiveness may include but does not require the victim of oppression and injustice to enter or re-enter a relationship with the offender. That may not even be wise or safe. One can forgive and be healed without ever being reconciled. They have a choice whether to re-engage or simply walk away.
If forgiveness is not saying: It is OK; I'm OK; you're OK, we are OK, then what is forgiveness and how does it complement grace or unmerited favor?

[130] http://www.clarion-journal.com/clarion_journal_of_spirit/2009/06/reconciled-to-what-by-brad-jersak.html

Forgiveness is giving up resentments, anger, bitterness, and sometimes hatred. Minimizing what others have done in the past helps us to lose perspective on what are acceptable boundaries. We will become overly sensitive and judgmental towards those who violate our boundaries real or imagined if we minimize or deny injustices or moral wrongs.

When we are gracious or forgiving we can accept people and love them yet still reject their actions. Condoning or minimizing or denying wrongs from the past energizes our judgmental-ism in the present. The very image of God stamped onto our souls cries out for justice. Denying justice through denial or minimization in one area confuses our sense of personal boundaries. When we do this we get confused about what to stand up for or what to tolerate.

God opposes the proud but gives His grace to the humble. That means He tough loves those who are at war in certain areas of their lives with Him. He doesn't pretend all is OK when things are not OK. And yet, God's kindness leads us to repentance. He also doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. He doesn't approve of our sins… but He loves us anyways. When I learned what grace was and that God gave it to me; I immediately wanted to give it to others. But I wrongly approached it by minimizing people's faults instead of loving the people despite their wrongs.

God dispenses His grace to the humble, and opposes (tough loves) the proud. If I am to give grace to others like I want to then I need to not judge them but still stand up to injustices. Injustices are not okay. Injustices have consequences. But how does one love the person but hate the sin? Like CS Lewis, I know that I have love for myself, but still despise my sins. So if I can treat myself like this… I should be able to love others in the same way. I can't throw stones at others because I am guilty too.

Working to build my life on the Rock (Jesus' truth) by forgiving and discarding lies has led me here. I am pretty well free… but every now and then while heading in the river of life and grace I find myself on the shores. So I still have a bumpy road to travel on at times. With my schizophrenia… stress and conflict both challenge me. But I'm not giving up because God loves me. That I am sure about!

Another Change Of Attitude...

For sometime I have looked down on a phenomena within Christendom because I have seen and experienced much by going through my Dark Journey to the point of downgrading the important truth/experience/and gift that this phenomena is.

I've heard it said that there are God shaped vacuums in the hearts of all people that Jesus does and can fill for those who welcome Him. I unfortunately looked down on this thinking rather proudly thinking that there was more to the Christian life than that experience. Boy was I ever wrong. Such is the beginning of Spiritual life... And everything after is built on the foundation of this phenomenon. The only way to grow spiritually is to invite Jesus into our God shaped vacuums and allow Him free reign of our hearts so He can dispel the darkness within us by His light/goodness/and presence.

I have repented from my pompous attitude... and feel relieved!

Living In The Present: (Thursday, January 26, 2012):

Committing to not attach, covet or hold onto yesterday's victories when it comes to how my day will go today is the way to live in the present. No two days are exactly the

same.[131] Living in the present means I am not aiming for yesterday's successes and trying to avoid yesterday's failures. Today is a new day. Living in the present means I am not expecting and setting my heart on things to go as smoothly as yesterday or in times or years past. If today they go smoothly fine: that is a bonus: praise GOD. Living in the present means I am not aiming to feel like I did yesterday if yesterday went well. Living in the present means I am not aiming to have pious feelings or trying to fabricate them. Living in the present I am open to today's challenges; open to love; open to letting God choose the agenda. Living in the present I am open to new ideas; I am open to learning new stuff; doing new things; not getting set in one's ways; and insulating oneself from boredom.

But how does hope play into living in the present? When things are tough then the promises of God sustain us in the present. How does working towards a goal play into living in the present? Goals that are to be fulfilled in the future need doable game plans. Each day I work on the small portion needed that will help achieve the goals I desire.

Friday, January 27, 2012:

I recently downloaded some Praise and Worship music from the 90's. It is much like what I used to listen to before I became ill with schizophrenia. It sounded beautiful… but I had judged in a proud way those who were fans of it after many years of moving on with my life. When I realized this pride I repented from it and was more able to listen to the music. Then I realized that I used to love this kind of music even when I became pompous and full of pride around the time the promise from God came for me: "To be broken into freedom". So there was some distrust in me for where the music may have led me to. Fact is Jesus was with me to save me way back then… and so long as I don't see my emotions as proof of my faith in, commitment to, and love for God then I'll be okay. There is nothing wrong with the music. The music is good and meant to be enjoyed… and that is what I intend to do: enjoy it. Not realizing I had this self-accusation I went through years of not enjoying what God wanted me to enjoy.

Thank you Lord God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for neither leaving me nor forsaking me and patiently restoring me. Amen, and Amen.

Repentance & A Insight on: Sunday, January 29, 2012:

Because I was such a proud and hateful person despite my conversion in 1989, when I read a book from a certain author I grew to harden my heart against Saul the first king of Israel because of his spiritual defects. I now know he landed up a mess because he took one step at a time in getting there. He wasn't always that screwed up. I now see his life as a lesson and warning for me.

I think I finally understand the nature of judgment: judging is hardening one's heart towards a person and involves hating the person i.e. being devoid of love for them.

So how does one not judge the person but judge the hurtful act? By not judging a person who has wronged me means I don't harden my heart towards them... but I don't accept their wrongful behavior. Hence the saying: I can love the person but hate the sin... just like I knew I did to myself for some time. If I can love myself when I do a wrong then I can do it to others with Jesus' help. People who are always nice to not only good people but the bad too, lack this understanding. Jesus was not a nice person. He stood up to injustices.

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[131] Thank you Colin for this freedom principle.

Wednesday, February 1, 2012:
Today I realized that aiming to keep the following saying from Jesus:

> 'You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also[132]

… by minimizing, and denying the wrongfulness of an evil person's actions against me is doomed to failure. We have God given boundaries[133]. If we minimize or deny the wrongfulness of evil actions against us we move boundaries. And we will quickly judge, get angry, and harden our hearts against others with chaos and hurt as a result. We will violate other people's boundaries too, besides allowing others to violate our imaginary boundaries (because our boundaries have moved). To keep these words from Jesus one must always recognize the wrongfulness of evil acts. But this is not enough by itself. To many people Jesus' words above seem like we aren't fighting or standing up for justice if we don't physically resist an evil person's violent actions against us. But by taking a non-violent stance we are fighting on a different level… a more powerful level. Look at what Martin Luther King Jr. accomplished for Negro' rights in the USA through non-violent resistance. It may seem like we are weak, cowardly, and throwing our lives away by non-physical resistance… but our fight is not against flesh and blood, but in the spiritual realm.
Moreover, looking at Jesus' words above as a "must do", "have to do" (no choice in the matter), and "no way out of it" command, rule, or principle to conform to, keep or aim for in one's own power is also doomed to failure. It will also become a very heavy burden to carry with such motivation. Only by focusing on and cultivating a relationship with Jesus and following Him by faith and trust will we have the power to keep those words above from Jesus when needed.
Moreover the words: "turn the other cheek" are not necessarily always applying to physical confrontation. But it can be taken to be talking about not returning insult for insult.
Actions And People And Sadness:
If Parents have healthy spiritually they will always love their children no matter what they do. That doesn't mean they will always like or agree with what their children do. No they may be appalled, outraged, or pissed off but their love for their children will remain. Children can choose paths away from the parent… and that means the healthy parent will respect the decisions made by the children. But not necessarily agree with those decisions. God is the healthiest parent alive. He loves us no matter what we do… but he doesn't always agree with what we do. How about that? God is love and not hatred and that means we have hope. He will give us what we want: Him or emptiness.
Today I was feeling incompetent in a certain area in my life and I realized that I was wrongly projecting a hatred for me as opposed to just not liking the results from my performance onto the person who was witnessing my efforts. When I realized that the person did not hate me but just wasn't happy about my efforts I had an, "ah ha" moment

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[132] Matthew 5:38-39, NRSV
[133] Deuteronomy 19:14

of insight, knowing truth, seeing change and repenting towards freedom. I also realized that I was in the habit of hating myself for what I saw as my poor efforts when others along with myself weren't happy with the results from my performance. When I realized this (along with feeling this deep sadness) I immediately repented from it and felt connected to myself along with feeling more deeply consolation and relief as though a BIG burden fell off my shoulders. I now realize that I need to make a distinction between actions and the people making the actions under scrutiny. This is something I have realized of late but had no idea that I was dysfunctional in this area in the way I describe above. Praise God for allowing situations to come my way that the Holy Spirit can point out where I am not living truth.

I thanked the Lord for this progress… but unlike previous times I did not assume that this was it. I asked God if there was more to the situation. He pointed to the sadness and informed me that I was in the habit of drowning my sorrows/sadness in eating food to comfort myself. I repented with Jesus' help through faith and felt like I had dealt with the sadness. But later I would realize that I needed to invite God into that emptiness. That I did… and my then impatience vanished and I had peace!

Thank you the Holy, True, and Living God for caring for me patiently. Amen, and Amen!

Some Issues Resolved:

Starting on February 12, 2012, I began to learn through reading: "How To Hear God's Voice"[134] that:

- Truth based principles have their place in the spiritual life: they are channels' of God's grace. They aren't the source of life instead they draw real life from the only source who is God.
- I also was re-informed that we all have a longing for God. We are all made for God. We may not seek Him out, we might not embrace Him more than others… but He is the cry of each person's heart… unfortunately some actually substitute the counterfeit that can't satisfy for the real thing. I realize that everyone no matter how small this desire is within them ought not be mocked, laughed at, or judged for expressing their feelings.
- When one studies a subject only by one's natural self instead of in cooperation with God, then pride is the natural out growth. When one invites God into the picture… when one becomes open to the Spirit (by asking God to teach us)… one is no longer alone in darkness (devoid of warmth and love and light)… and one will not be motivated out of fear and dread… one will be motivated out of community and fellowship and love from and with God… one will be open to joy: not despair, open to love: not pride, open to HD (the full picture: true knowledge) not analogue (partial knowledge and sometimes misleading ideas). One won't take the credit for learning new things (One will thank God for what one learns: insights and revelation). One will become teachable… and one will ask God to wash one from one's sins instead of having un-confessed sins.

Nice Or Messy?

In theoretical mathematics there are often concise and beautiful, equations with elegant solutions. In applied mathematics there is often a mess… with computer generated

[134] Mark & Patti Virkler

solutions along with hand waving. Today I wanted to approach life as though it was like theoretical mathematics… but today I realized again that life is messy… and that everything that comes my way does not fit into a perfect row of ducks.

Thursday, February 16, 2012:

Today I asked the Lord for a word and He said: "Love as I have loved you." Boy does that ever pack a punch of clarity and soberness! It comes from John 13:34-35: "Love one another. As I have loved you!" Jesus loves us to death. Lord God thanks for putting love into my heart. It comes out every now and then. Please lead me in the way of ever lasting.

Thursday, March 1, 2012:

Today I had a great day. I now realize that everyone has both good and bad attributes. I know that I have tended to go from one extreme to the next in how I viewed or treated people. The land in between is land that needs to be plowed (it hurts to plow). When I can see others somewhere in between the two extremes with good and bad attributes then I am more able to see myself there too. That makes me more accepting, humble, and at peace. And the more balanced view I have of myself the better. I know that in the past when I saw others as purely evil my energy towards them became hostile, unkind, angry, and hateful. But now I feel at peace!

Sunday, March 11, 2012:

I have been editing my story and I came across some truths that I had forgotten about in all their fullness. Negativity is from the dark side. The devil lies to me about people and myself, and tries to destroy my good expectations for people and myself. The devil does not want me to see people's potential. Neither do devils want me to see my potential. Demons want me to focus on flaws so they become big and distorted… to the point where I get hopeless and angry… with things getting dark and with me becoming unkind… and so I sow bad seeds of unbelief, animosity, judging, controlling, and attempts of manipulation, instead of kindness and freedom.

Monday, March 12, 2012:

In order to change one's thoughts/paradigms/attitudes one need not always argue one's way out of the old into the new. The new is a gift from God through Jesus Christ… it is part of our inheritance. Often the old dark thoughts are just smoke put there by evil spirits hoping to convince us that we thought them and that we must be evil or spiritually deformed because we have such evil thoughts enter into our heads. One ought not waste one's time arguing with them. For too long evil spirits have lied their way into our lives robbing us of our true identity. They lie to saying that we have a sinful nature that is bad, depraved, and evil when in fact we don't. Yes we do sin. Yes we do have darkness within us, but it is a lack of Holy Spirit. Sin does not come from a nature but from our wills.

Insights:

Two weeks ago I realized with Sophie's and the Holy Spirit's leading that the command to serve meant to serve the best interest of those we are serving. The literal interpretation leads to anger, conflict, and frustration when followed to the letter.

On the weekend I realized this kind of thinking applies to alms giving too. When somebody asks for alms I need to give her or him and what is best for them... If money then money ... If food then food... If comfort then comfort... If a job then a job... If time then time... and if friendship then friendship. Somehow I need to invest in the lives of the less fortunate for their benefit... And I am definitely called to not finance other peoples' laziness, or narcissism.

Lending is not the same as alms giving. Somehow I thought it was because of a combination of psychosis, legalism, and laminating one verse onto another… so I had it wrong! These insights remove even more legalism and rubbish from my conscience. Thank you Sophie and Holy Spirit. Amen, and Amen!

Dark Journey Or Night Is Over:

I have had clarity of mind, peace, and joy since Monday, March 12, 2012. The oppression, constant judging, sadness, and psychosis are gone. I have PEACE. It has been ten days of unmatched stability, sanity, and level-headed-ness that was not seen in twenty-years of me enduring the mental illness of schizophrenia.

One Dark Night:

The following is a poem by Saint John of the Cross. It became precious to me through my Dark Night or Journey. It took on new meaning for me while God was setting me Free from my past resentments, imploded anger, judging, hatred, legalism, intolerance, pride, un-belief, distorted view of each human, and my self-centeredness.

STANZAS OF THE SOUL[135]

1. One dark night,
fired with love's urgent longings
- ah, the sheer grace! -
I went out unseen,
my house being now all stilled.

2. In darkness, and secure,
by the secret ladder, disguised
- ah the sheer grace! -
in darkness and concealment,
my house being now all stilled.

3. On that glad night,
in secret, for no one saw me,
nor did I look at anything,
with no other light or guide
than the one that burned in my heart.

4. This guided me
more surely than the light of noon
to where He was awaiting me
- Him I knew so well -
there in a place where no one appeared.

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[135] K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works Of St. John Of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), pp. 358-359, or P. 2.; John Michael Talbot has beautifully put the words of this poem to music along with others on his CD called, "The Lover and the Beloved".

5. O guiding Night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
the lover with his beloved
transforming the beloved in the lover.

6. Upon my flowering breast
which I kept for Him alone,
there he lay sleeping,
and I caressing Him
there in a breeze from the fanning cedars.

7. When the breeze blew from the turret,
as I parted His hair
it wounded my neck
with its gentle hand,
suspending all my senses.

8. I abandoned and forgot myself,
laying my face on my beloved;
all things ceased; I went out from myself,
leaving my cares
forgotten among the lilies.

Initially, the Dark Night or Journey was terrifying to me. I was gripped by the fear of not remaining loyal to Jesus. Looking back now, I see it as Saint John of the Cross does. I see it as a glad night; paradoxically, a mountaintop experience deep in a valley!
While waiting for God's promise to be fulfilled, I was fired with love's urgent longings, passionately looking forward to my crucial longings being met (the joys that only relationship with God can provide).[136]
God's grace being what my heart now runs on I can truly cry out aloud with Saint John - ah, the sheer grace. Humbling myself through repentance and faith I went by the secret ladder, disguised on the narrow way belonging to Jesus. In the process I found my house being now all stilled. This was seen by having my inordinate appetites reduced to their proper proportions under the control of the Spirit.
As my Dark Night continued to draw to a close, the brightness I saw waiting for me at the end of my tunnel, guided me/ more surely than the light of noon. All of the chaos, confusion, darkness, and oppression slowly lifted off me.
When the one dark night ended is difficult to say. It ended in part on May 1, 2001 when I gave up my first of many resentments and joy began to return to me. It ended in part when the Gale blew itself out. It ended in part when the major negative symptoms from my schizophrenia disappeared during June 2006. It ended in part when I found quiet reign within me starting mid August 2011. And it will finally end completely when I am clothed as the opening quotation in this chapter commands or promises.

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[136] Cf. Larry Crabb, Inside Out, NavPress (1988), p. 87

As I have yet to die and be made perfect, I still suffer from concupiscence. This means that I have an inclination towards sin. There are still times when I am tempted towards doing wrong and giving into temptations. The only difference is that I don't have any compulsions, or addictions towards any particular sins anymore. I am Free. When I sin, and I do sin, I confess my faults to God (or go to confession), and move on.
I am not a "Saint" in the sense of Catholic tradition, but I am a "saint" in the sense that the apostle Paul used in the Bible. I don't think that the Church will ever canonize me – I'm no paragon of virtue, but I am holy (which is what the word saint means) by virtue of being a temple filled with God.
As I'm not completely healthy, I don't have anything else to report at this time. However, I will add any further changes when I see them to future versions of this book.

Chapter 12

CONCLUSION

The story of Lazarus' life, death, and resurrection as told in John Chapter 11 can be considered a parable for my life. Like Lazarus I too had people concerned about me when I first became devastatingly ill, and they also sent word to Jesus with prayers on my behalf to do something for me. However, Jesus was seemingly unmoved. He waited for me to die to my self-righteous-independence-know-better than God and others attitudes by making me enter darkness for many days where my diseased heart and mind was cauterized by intense heat from the flaming Holy Spirit through pain and suffering in preparation for renewal and repentance. Then as Jesus would have it, He showed up, and called me out of my tomb. I arose, but I still had my grave clothes on, and so He ordered that these wrappings of death be discarded through my repentance and renewal with His help direction and strength. Therefore because of this, He is clothing me in newness of life.
The following question therefore arises: How should one live during the Dark times or Journeys?
First of all, don't focus too much on the symptoms whether or not they are caused by demons, chemicals or biology. Jesus ought to be our focus together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Keep it simple, reject the evil and, more than that embrace the good. Seek counsel from mature Christians. Do not look too far ahead. Do not worry about tomorrow. Rather invest in tomorrow by trusting God today. He will open doors for you to walk through, and close doors that are not in His plans for you. Wait patiently for the Lord to lift you up by humbling yourself now. Jesus calls us to live out the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount through His leading and grace.[137] Be fruit and friendship focused not rule and slave focused. Persevere in prayer. Fight off bitterness, and grow in thankfulness.
The demons will help you paint your life as having a future both bleak, and dark. They will lie to you about your identity. They will help you paint God as distant and

[137] Cf. Matthew 5:1-7:29, or Luke 6:20-6:49

unconcerned with no future blessings coming from Him. They will help you question everything that you are standing on. Remember those saints that have gone before you. Remember the cross. Be brave, and lean not on your own understanding when this darkness enfolds you. When Scripture says not to lean on your own understanding, God is not telling you to stop thinking. Rather, He is telling you to not give up on Him when He appears to be absent from a dark and bleak world. Instead, lean on Him who loves you with an unending sacrificial love. It's difficult, but not impossible. God is doing a work in you, and if so much pain and suffering are going into it, something glorious will come out in the end if you endure to the end! As Scripture says, God will bestow on us a crown of beauty instead of ashes.[138]

If you decide to follow the way of Christ through your trials or Dark Journeys, then it won't be easy. You can overcome all of the adversity in life through the grace of God that is in Christ Jesus through faith! Deciding to believe that God is good, that He is inside your heart supplying grace to your every need, is much easier than going at it alone. What are the alternatives? Believing that there is a purpose to your suffering goes a long way to offset any prolonged anger. The rewards are well worth it – you can do it with His love. Know this: it is our faith in Jesus that enables us to overcome the world. Do not feign thankfulness; thankfulness is not commanded. Do not see you being thankful as a duty or a key to salvation. Let your thankfulness arise genuinely not by force without choice. God is not a slave driver. Work through your feelings slowly. As far as is possible conquer your fears with your faith by believing that you can do all things through Jesus who strengthens you.

How else would we know that God does save to the uttermost, unless we are severely tested? How else would we know what holiness is if we weren't purified in the loving fire of God? How else would we know that God is faithful to us if we didn't go through deep waters with God there sustaining us? How else would we come to know more deeply the living God's love, if we did not suffer?

When God makes a promise, and it is fulfilled, the recipient knows that it comes from God, because God always gives something special. All journeys to Freedom and maturity do not come without cost. Also, faith is required, because at times it will appear "crazy" to believe in God's promises. When God makes a promise, He may be late in fulfilling it. My prayer is that God's Love that is seasoned with truth and compassion might bore tunnels of love into your heart as He did with me in my Dark Journey. Just imagine the results – real Freedom!

After my Dark Journey life still had its share of hardships. It did not erase all the riddles of life, but deepened the mysteries that my eyes were open to. It did not do away with circumstances that stir doubts in my mind. I still look through a dark mirror. True, the essentials of Christian faith aren't really in doubt, but my certainty about them is still growing in my heart and mind. If there is no doubt there can be no growth in faith. I still have at different times much confusion. And I suppose that all these different aspects of life will form more character in me if I allow them to. Without wanting to follow the commands found in the Gospels there would be fewer difficulties in life, but in the end there would be no Freedom, and no lasting joy!

So where do I go from here? Nelson Mandela said:

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[138] Cf. Isaiah 61:3

> After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.[139]

The following is part of a prayer I wrote to God while meditating on the broken pieces of my old dreams, and contemplating what my future dreams might be:

Dear Heavenly Father, I admit that even with the way you separated the light from the darkness within me, I find pockets of doubt within me. I ask myself – will you do this or that for me? And more importantly, I ask myself – will I do this or that for you? Both questions are difficult. And I can't answer them straight out with flat "Yes" or "No" answers [at this time, because I'm only supposed to live one day at a time]! You're not predictable. Even after you inspired the Bible, I still find after reading it that many of your ways are incomprehensible. I can't put you into a box.
True, You do give promises, but will we hold onto them in the darkness, and will we hold onto them in prosperity? I can't penetrate the veil over the future. The only things left in me are a conviction that you are good, and that I want to do your will as much as possible out of thankfulness for what you have done [for the world as well as for myself].

Victory is saying no to evil; and not so much saying yes to good, but saying yes to God who is Love.
I used to think that king Solomon was wrong to ask for wisdom from God. A wise person may not always follow his wisdom if he doesn't have a pure heart. After all, look at what happened to Solomon. I thought that my choice was wiser. My choice was a pure heart. But a pure heart can be corrupted if it has no wisdom. So what is to be done? The answer is that these gifts go together. In that way the road to love through faith and hope will more than likely be negotiated.
Later, after realizing this, I decided that if God were to ask me for whatever I wanted, then I would have to say I would want Him (who is LOVE its very self). On the one hand I already have Him in my heart. On the other hand, I would be bad company for God if I did not have a pure heart. I would also make bad decisions if I lacked wisdom and so bring shame to His Name. So I thought, I would have to say if God asked me to ask for one thing, then I would have to ask Him that we might enjoy His fellowship for ever. Then it dawned on me that I already know how God would answer me! He would say, "Then follow me!" Amen, and Amen!

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[139] Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela, Little, Brown & Company (1994)