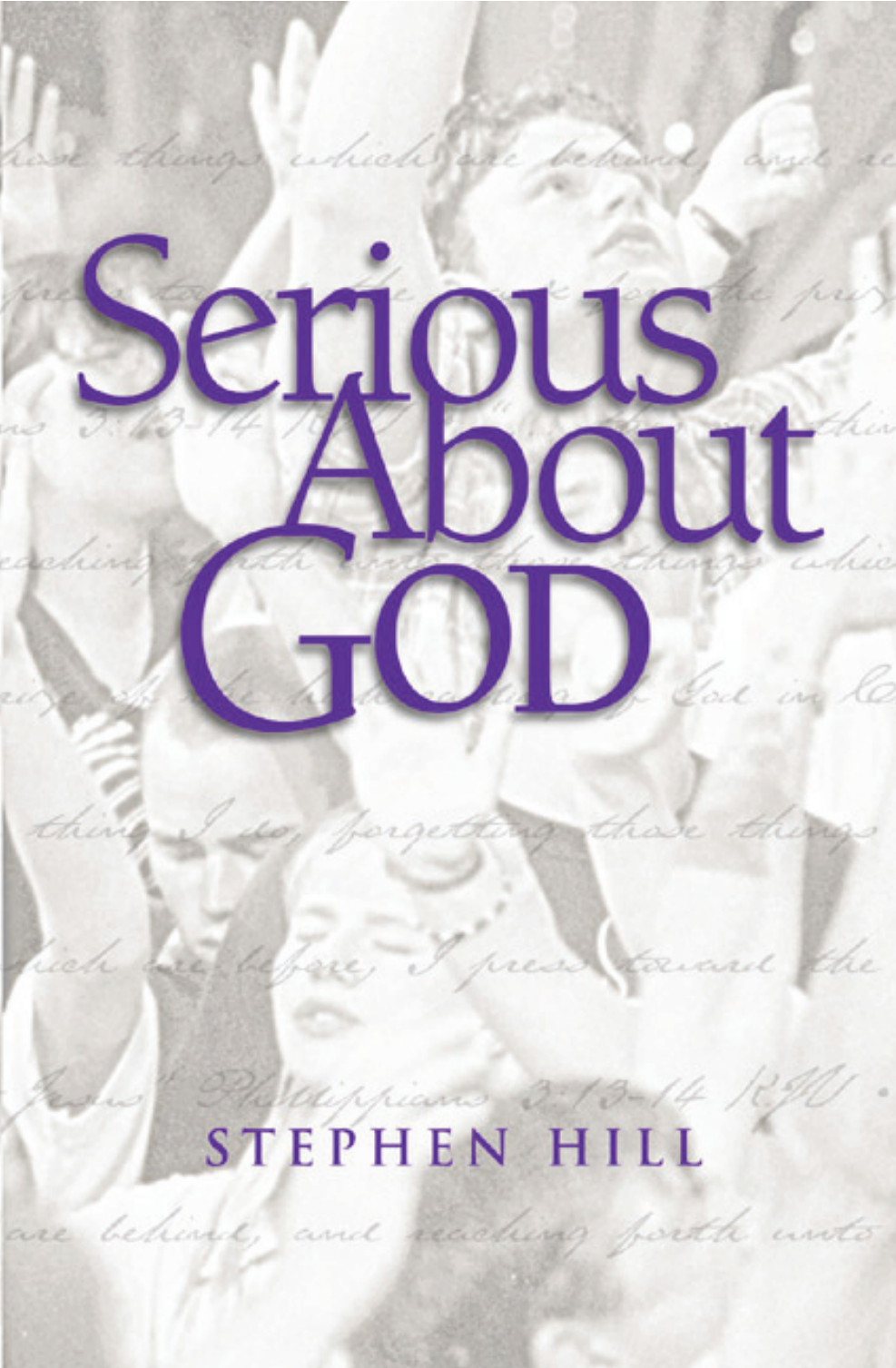




Serious About GOD

STEPHEN HILL

Serious About God

Stephen Hill

Copyright 1999

Steve Hill Ministries

P.O. Box 612288

Dallas, TX 75261

U.S.A.

Scripture permissions:

KJV, NIV, NASB, NKJV

CONTENTS

PART ONE: A SERIOUS BEGINNING

A SERIOUS BEGINNING.....	9
GET THE SIN OUT!	10
THE BIBLE	14
PRAYER	17
BE BAPTIZED.....	20
HOLY SPIRIT	24
WITNESS	29
FIND A LOCAL CHURCH.....	31
GIVING.....	34

PART TWO: OVERCOMING THE FORCES AGAINST YOU

TWO FACTS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE	38
NO-MAN'S LAND	40
WINNING THE BATTLE OVER THE FLESH	47
LOVERS OF PLEASURE	55

PART THREE: LIVING IN VICTORY

THE LEVELS OF LIFE	61
LEARN TO BE A GOD SEEKER	65
THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE IN	71

“As much as God desires the salvation of men, He will not prostitute heaven, and set the gates of it wide open to those who only fly to it in extremity but never sought it in good earnest, nor indeed do now care for it, or desire it for any other reason, but to excuse them from going to hell.

—Richard Baxter 1615-1691

Dear Friend,

I rejoice with you over your decision to get serious about God! Maybe, like millions of others, you are one who has **never known** Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, and you have responded to the message of the Gospel desiring an intimate relationship with the Lord. My friend, you have made the wisest decision of your life. The Bible says that “**whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved**” (Acts 2:21 NKJV).

Perhaps you have responded to Jesus Christ due to your **backslidden** condition. A person who is backslidden is someone who was once in communion with God, but has since drifted away. A backslider has lost his or her spiritual appetite and has grown worldly in actions and desires. If this is you, the Lord welcomes you home just as the prodigal’s father welcomed his son home (Luke 15:11-24).

Could it be that you are a **religious** person, perhaps even a faithful church attendee, but you responded to the message simply because you realized you did not know the Lord? It is very possible to attend church all your life and never develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I am thrilled that you have decided to move from religion to relationship.

Regardless of which of these three categories you might find yourself in, the information contained on the following pages will help you tremendously. I want to ask you to prayerfully read through this book. Ask Jesus to help you absorb the words and their meaning into your spirit. If you will follow the simple instructions within these pages, you will find yourself growing strong in your relationship with Jesus Christ.

May the blessings of the Lord be upon you. Remember, when you get serious about God, He gets serious about you...

Your friend,

Stephen Hill

Part I

A SERIOUS BEGINNING

Welcome to the family of God! If you have just been born again, or if you have found your way back to the forgiveness of the Lord, you have made the most important decision of your life! Now it is time to get serious about your relationship with Jesus.

Right now you are standing on the threshold of new opportunity and new life. All the old has been forgotten; you left it at the foot of the cross. The slate is clean. You now have the opportunity to walk in newness of life with Jesus. Be like Paul who said, “**...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 3:13-14 KJV).

The next few pages are full of practical insight which will be helpful to you as you press on toward that same prize. I encourage you to keep this booklet handy and read through it often. Even if you feel that you are familiar with some of the points, read them through again anyway and allow them to become fresh in your heart.

GET THE SIN OUT!

Before going any further, we need to take a moment to actually *define* sin. The lines today have become so blurred, many have no idea what sin really is anymore. We’ve lost the boundaries—we’ve lost the definition of right and wrong. Everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes.

Simply put, ***sin is anything Jesus would not do***. You see, Jesus faced the same temptations we do, and He faced them as flesh and blood just as we are—however, He did not sin. The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that we “**do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin**” (Hebrews 4:15 NASB). Apparently then, there is a way to face the temptations of life without sinning—and Jesus is our example.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray,

but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls (1 Peter 2:21-25 NIV).

Jesus knew full well the consequences of sin and that is why He laid down His life to free us from the bondage of sin and death.

Sin will enslave you: Jesus said, **“I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin”** (John 8:34 NIV).

Sin will destroy you: **“For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Romans 6:23 KJV).

And worst of all, sin separates you from God: **“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear”** (Isaiah 59:2 NASB).

When you lived a sinful life, it was as if the devil was courting you. He was wooing you with lofty promises. ***To take hold of the hand of God, you must let go of the hand of the devil.***

You must ‘break-up with the devil’ so-to-speak. It’s time to get rid of all the ‘articles of affection’ which you collected in that relationship. The devil, like a jilted lover, will only use those things to try and lure you away from God. Get rid of his junk.

Now that you have gotten serious about God, you need to perform a thorough spiritual house cleaning with the Holy Spirit. You see, Jesus commanded the adulterous woman to **“Go and sin no more”** (see John 8). Likewise, you must get rid of all the junk in your life. Pour out the alcohol, flush the drugs down the toilet, burn the pornography and destroy any videos that would be an offence to Jesus, and so on. The Holy Spirit will lead you, just ask Him. A good rule to follow, concerning movies, music or anything you’re not sure about keeping is this: *If you can’t ask Jesus to come and watch or listen to it with you—if you feel His presence leave—then it’s wrong.*

THE BIBLE

Wouldn’t it be nice to get a ‘love letter’ from *God*? Well...you did! The Bible is God’s love letter to His children. You may have looked at a copy of the Bible (also called God’s Word or the Gospel), before and found it cold and difficult to understand. However, when you truly become a child of God, His Holy Spirit brings understanding. You can ask Him to help you comprehend and receive the Word every time you sit down to read it. You will often find yourself reading something that speaks directly to your spirit. Why? Because the Bible is one of God’s ways of communicating with His children.

The psalmist David didn’t have as much of the Bible as we have today. However, he spoke often of the value of what he did have. He would tell God things like, **“I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your**

word in my heart that I might not sin against you. Praise be to you, O LORD; teach me your decrees” (Psalm 119:10-12 NIV). And, **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path”** (Psalm 119:105 KJV).

You should develop the habit of reading from God’s Word daily. It will guide your steps all of your days. But don’t simply run through it—savor it, let it go through you. Remember, as the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”** (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV).

There are several versions of the Bible available today. You see, the Bible was originally written in Hebrew and Greek. Not a lot of people read those languages, so translation became necessary. The *King James Version* was translated about 300 years ago and is a favorite of many pastors and Bible scholars. However, since it is written in Old English, it can be a little difficult to understand. (The *New King James Version* is in more modern English.) *The New American Standard Version* is like an ‘upgrade’ of the King James and uses words which are a little more common today. Another direct translation is the *New International Version*. It has become the most commonly used translation today and is widely accepted for its accuracy and adherence to the original text. Throughout this book, I have used references from all four versions.

Don’t ever be ashamed of the Bible. As Paul said, **“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”** (Romans 1:16 KJV).

“Some people stumble over their intellect and say they can’t understand Christianity. Many parts of the Bible I don’t understand, but I am not going to fight against my Lord with my puny reason.”

—Dwight L. Moody 1837-1899

PRAYER

The simplest definition of prayer is...*talking to God*. Up to this point, you have asked Jesus to forgive you, to come into your heart, to change you and to be your best friend. Would you talk to your ‘best friend’ as if he or she were some far off ‘thing’? No, you wouldn’t. You don’t have to talk to God that way, either. In fact, Jesus rebuked those who used lofty, religious speech to pray. You can wake up in the morning and say, “Good morning, Jesus! What have You got planned for me today, Lord?”

Prayer is communion with God about yourself and about others. There is no greater opportunity in the world than to take petitions and requests before Almighty God. In the world today, people talk about prayer, but there is only one prayer a sinner can pray that

God hears—the prayer of repentance. However, once the Blood of Jesus has been applied to your life, you are able to come boldly before God with your prayers.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16 KJV).

Your Heavenly Father is your helper, your strong tower, your refuge. Jesus has opened the door for us to have this communion. He even tells us we can refer to God as, “Father.”

The Bible will teach you a lot about prayer. In it you can find scripture regarding when to pray, how to pray, how not to pray and more.

In the morning, O LORD, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait in expectation (Psalm 5:3 NIV).

Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice (Psalm 55:17 KJV).

And it came to pass in those days, that [Jesus] went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12 KJV).

Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you (1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 KJV).

Jesus told the disciples, **“And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him” (Matthew 6:7-8 NASB).**

God promises, **“He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honor him” (Psalm 91:15 KJV).**

Determine in your heart to spend time—every day—talking to your best friend, Jesus. Your relationship with Him will grow only as you allow time in your schedule for prayer.

“Prayer is as natural an expression of faith as breathing is of life; and to say a man lives a life of faith, and yet lives a prayerless life, is every bit as inconsistent and incredible as to say that a man lives without breathing.”

—Jonathan Edwards 1703-1758

BE BAPTIZED

The word *baptize* comes from the Greek word meaning *to immerse*. The Bible refers to three different baptisms: into Christ's body, in water, and in the Holy Spirit.

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19 KJV).

Baptism into Christ's body took place the moment you were born-again. The Holy Spirit had been at work wooing you to Jesus. When you accepted Him as Savior, the Holy Spirit took up residence within you. That is when regeneration began: **"he [Jesus] breathed on them, and saith unto them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'"** (John 20:22 KJV). You became filled with the Spirit of life rather than death. In this case, you could say it was the Holy Spirit who was baptizing you into Jesus.

Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (John 3:5 KJV)

Baptism in water is symbolic of your obedience to follow Jesus in His *death, burial* and *resurrection*. Stepping into the water represents the death of your 'old life' with all its sin and carnality. Being immersed under the water is symbolic of the burial of the old life. Being raised up out of the water is symbolic of the resurrection of the new you. **"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life"** (Romans 6:4 KJV). Usually, it is a qualified member of the leadership of your local church who performs the baptism in water.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:13-15 NIV).

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is sort of a turn around on the first baptism. You see, this time it is Jesus doing the baptizing. John the Baptist said of Jesus, **"I baptized you with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit"** (Mark 1:8 NASB). The Holy Spirit *filled* you the moment you were born-again, and started working a change in your heart, filling you with peace and joy.

And I [Jesus] will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and *will be in you*. (John 14:16-17 NIV emphasis mine)

Jesus wants you to be more than filled. He wants you to be *overflowing*! It is a gift from Him, available to any born again child of God. This gift from Jesus of the baptism in the Holy Spirit empowers you to properly grow as a child of God. **"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"** (Galatians 3:27 KJV). You can read more about the activity of the Holy Spirit in the following section.

HOLY SPIRIT

Without the presence of the Holy Spirit here on earth, there would be total chaos. He is the manifest presence of God on earth. Jesus, when He knew He would be departing this world, promised to ask the Father to send us a Counselor who would be with us forever, to teach and guide:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26 KJV).

But further, Jesus made it clear that there was more. He instructed those who believed on Him to wait for the *baptism* of the Holy Ghost.

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8 KJV).

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:2-4 KJV).

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31 KJV).

You see, Jesus' ministry began when He was empowered spiritually by the Holy Ghost. The Bible records that after Jesus was baptized in water by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in the form of a dove. Jesus was then led by the Spirit through a time of testing and trial. He was victorious over the temptation of the flesh and of Satan because He was empowered by the Holy Spirit, (see Matthew 3:13-4:11).

Similarly, for every believer, there is more of the power of God to be had in your life. As Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843) said, "Let the Holy Spirit fill every chamber of your heart; and so there will be no room for folly or the world, or Satan, or the flesh."

You receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit simply by asking the Lord. Your Heavenly Father will not give you a stone if you ask for bread; likewise, He will not give you a counterfeit if you ask for more of the Holy Spirit in your life.

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:13 KJV)

Sometimes Jesus baptizes a believer in the Holy Spirit because of the prayers of someone else. Other times, He baptizes right where you are whenever you ask Him. Jesus is a giver and He loves to bless those who are His. There are also times when another Spirit-filled Christian who is living a holy life before God may lay hands on you (upon your request) and you will receive the baptism. That is what happened in Acts 8:14-19.

On the Day of Pentecost, disciples who had made a decision to follow Jesus **“were all filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4 KJV)**. The baptism in the Holy Spirit with the initial physical evidence of speaking in other tongues is a gift from Jesus to every Christian who desires it.

No matter how you receive Jesus’ gift of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, remember it is a gift received by faith. Beyond salvation, it is a vital experience of a Christian, as it is the initial introduction into the beauty and power of a Spirit-filled life. This *infilling* of the Holy Spirit empowers you in your salvation.

One thing to keep in mind is, although the baptism of the Holy Spirit takes place once, the *infilling* must be continuous. Someone once asked the great preacher Charles Spurgeon why he felt he had to be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, to which he replied, “Because I leak.”

Too often, a Christian will think that he or she has attained all that’s needed for battle and march out, only to feel weak and inadequate for the task. Always remember, once a soldier’s armor and weapons are *obtained*, they must be forever cared for and ‘*maintained*.’ Similarly, you must always be filled. Never allow sin or compromise to dam up the flow of the Holy Spirit in you...and through you.

Keep in mind, you receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...power to overcome, and power to witness.

“What a difference in men who go into battle intending to conquer if they can, and those who go into battle intending to conquer.”

–Dwight L. Moody 1837-1899

WITNESS

In any court case, a witness is someone who is able to shed light on a particular occurrence. In a similar manner, Jesus told us we would be His witnesses.

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have (1 Peter 3:15 NIV).

What have you witnessed? How about a life-changing God who loves you and cares about you?

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matthew 5:16 KJV).

Your enemy, the devil, may try to convince you to keep it quiet, that religion is a ‘personal thing.’ Keep in mind—Christianity is a public thing. Jesus was crucified publicly, on top of a hill, stripped naked, beaten, bruised and spit upon, for all to see. There was nothing private about it. Do not be ashamed to talk about the One who paid such a price for your salvation.

Jesus said,

Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 10:32-33 NASB).

Though you despise the sin of your past life, don’t be ashamed to share the testimony of what God delivered you from. You are a witness of God’s power to completely change a life.

Remember, you are an overcomer because of the Blood of Jesus that saved and washed you, because of your testimony (your pure Christian witness to others), and because you do not love your life so much that you are not willing to lay it down for the cause of Christ.

And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death (Revelation 12:11 KJV).

FIND A LOCAL CHURCH

You need to find a strong, Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church to become a part of. Sitting at home and watching a preacher on TV just isn’t the same. The true Church is global; it is made up of those from all over the world who have received eternal life through Christ Jesus. Locally, you have little representatives of that global church.

Jesus desired for His Body (His Church) to be in fellowship. You may find people there who don’t look the way you think they should or act the way you think they should, but remember: they are all part of the body of Christ. Keep in mind that everyone is under ‘spiritual construction.’ God will finish what He starts (see Philippians 1:6).

There is no ‘perfect’ church because the church is made up of humans. It won’t be perfect before you get there...or after you get there. What you should find—and give—is love.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the

manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV).

You don't go to church just to see what you can get, although, as a new Christian, you will receive many blessings from the teachings and fellowship. That is simply a by-product. You go to church to give. You go to give praise and glory to the Lord in a corporate setting. You also encourage other believers as you give love to one another.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another (John 13:34-35 KJV).

Further, God often uses the local church to help us in finding His perfect will for our lives. By attending a church, you will be surrounded with godly pastors and teachers whose counsel will help guide you in your walk with the Lord.

When looking for a church, remember that the Bible is the only authoritative Word of God. Stay away from churches which claim to have books of 'further revelation.' Also look for a church where you are free to worship in spirit and in truth; where the Holy Spirit is honored and allowed to control the services.

"Praise and thanksgiving are the most delectable business of heaven; and God grant they may be our greatest delight, our most frequent employment upon earth!"

—Isaac Barrow 1630-1705

GIVING

One of the awesome aspects of coming to know God is the realization that He created everything...and He owns everything. As David stated in his psalm,

The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein (Psalm 24:1 KJV).

There is great comfort to be taken in that understanding. God owns everything, and He made man to be a steward over what is His. To be a steward is like being a manager over what God has given you. Paul was explaining this concept to the Corinthians when he said, **"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful"** (1 Corinthians 4:2). As a Christian, you must learn to be faithful in the use of what is yours, including your time, talents, possessions, resources and finances.

The record of the establishment of the tithe can be found as early as the fourth chapter of Genesis, when Cain and Abel brought offerings of the *first-fruits* of their labor to the Lord. It is therefore conceivable that God had imparted this divine principle to their father, Adam.

The word 'tithe' simply means 'tenth.' For example, if you receive a paycheck (gross pay, not net) for \$100, your 'tithe' on that amount would be \$10. When you give God what belongs to Him through your local church, you are acting in obedience to His Word.

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase (Proverbs 3:9 KJV).

Jacob told the Lord, **"...and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You" (Genesis 28:22 NKJV).**

However, when you withhold the tithe, either through fear, unbelief, selfishness or something else, God looks at that as robbing Him. God said,

Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. But you ask, "How do we rob you?" In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. (Malachi 3:8-10 NIV)

When you become part of a local church, see how you can become involved. God has given you the ability to be helpful in some area. When you weep with those who weep, rejoice with those who rejoice and comfort those who need comfort, you are giving of yourself. Ask the Lord to show you areas in which you can be a giver. It is a privilege, and according to Jesus, it is rewarded:

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Luke 6:38 NIV)

Part 2

TWO FACTS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

I

There is a violent, powerful force against you from the moment you are born. Broken down, it is composed of:

Temptations of the world. A temptation is a test. It will either strengthen you or destroy you. It could be success, alcohol, drugs, sexual lust, pride, covetousness, love of money...the list goes on and on.

The vanity and pride of a deceitful heart. Jeremiah said, **“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”** (Jeremiah 17:9). Unfortunately, we are much more prone to rely upon the leading of ‘our heart’ than upon God.

The great deceiver and destroyer of your souls. **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Peter 5:8 KJV). He is a murderer, (see John 8:44). The Word of God says that Satan came to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). His driving passion is for you to one day be separated from God and to burn in Hell. As A. W. Tozer consistently reminded his congregation, “We are living in enemy territory.”

But I’ve got good news!

II

There is a *much more* violent, powerful force within you from the moment you are *born-again*!

Don’t ever forget: **“The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil”** (1 John 3:8 NASB). Jesus gained the victory over the world through His death, burial and resurrection! You can live in that victory!!

NO-MAN'S LAND

Most people think of “No-man’s Land” as a place where no one wants to live. The term usually describes an area of uninhabited land of an indefinite or uncertain character. Nobody wants to stay there, including demons. Now keep in mind that this is not an in-depth study, however, it will cover some very practical points you should know about the enemy and his tactics.

The demons of hell are looking for a place to live.

They refuse to hang out in No-man’s Land. Jesus explained that, **“when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places, seeking rest, and does not find it”** (Matthew 12:43 NASB). Peter warned his listeners to **“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”** (1 Peter 5:8 KJV). The devil and his demons are active, continually hunting out places to inhabit.

When you open the door to sin—you open the door to the devil.

When you allow sin into your life, into your home, it is as if you laid out a big welcome mat that reads: “WELCOME DEMONS!” You see, Satan knows all about sin and its consequences. He traffics in sin, and when you open the door to sin it’s like walking into the devil’s marketplace—you always end up with more than you bargained for.

Demons not only attack, but overpower people who are only imitating the things of God and not really obedient children of God.

By only imitating the things of God—by not living a life consecrated to Christ but invoking His Name—you might be *inviting* demons in instead of casting them out. Consider what happened to the seven sons of a man named Sceva:

But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches.” And seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. And the evil spirit answered and said to them, “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?” And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:13-16 NASB)

Get real with God, and He will get real with you. He will give you the power to overcome the strongholds in your life, through the power in His name.

The resistance you show in private reveals the power over demons you have in public.

You can stand up in front of a group of people and shout, “Devil, I cast you out in the Name of Jesus,” all you want, but if you are not overcoming the enemy in your private life, you will not overcome him publicly either. The incident with the seven sons of Sceva is good

proof of that. Pet sins that you think no one knows about because they are done privately will be your ultimate defeat. You must resist the devil in your thought life and in your private life—or he will destroy you publicly.

The story found in Matthew 4:1-11 tells us of the time Jesus spent all alone in the wilderness being tempted by the devil. He resisted the devil in private and by doing so, later revealed His power over him in public. Similarly, if the Lord's position in your private life is intact, then His power in your public life will also be intact.

When the demons come knocking, you'd better allow Jesus to answer the door.

When you are saved, born again, washed in the Blood of the Lamb, the Spirit of the living God comes to take residence in you. That is why it is said, **“Greater is He that is in you [the Holy Spirit] than he that is in the world [the devil]”** (see 1 John 4:4). You become the temple of the Holy Spirit: **“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are”** (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 KJV).

A born-again child of God has the power to resist. The power of the Holy Spirit abides within. Let Jesus answer the door when temptation comes knocking.

Demons will always return to see if you have changed your mind.

Jesus explained it this way: **When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. (Matthew 12:43-45 NKJV)**

The unclean spirit (or demon) came back to the house (person) to see if he had changed his mind. The demon noticed three things about the house.

It was *swept*...well, that's certainly good—all the bad was gone.

It was put in *order*...that's also good—everything was organized and tidy.

It was *empty*...there was the problem. That one word explains why there was room for the other demons. This individual had left his house vacant. It should have been full of the Holy Spirit, but he had never allowed Jesus to move in and be his Lord.

Unfortunately, this person still had the doormat out that read, “Welcome Demons!” The doormat should have read, “HOLY SPIRIT LIVES HERE!” The demons would have continued roaming No-man's Land instead of moving in and wreaking havoc. Friend, be sure you know what mat is outside your door.

“There is nothing more deceitful than your estimate of your own strength.”

—Robert M. McCheyne 1813-1843

“Sins are like circles in the water when a stone is thrown into it: one produces another. When anger was in Cain’s heart, murder was not far off.”

—Philip Henry 1631-1696

WINNING THE BATTLE OVER THE FLESH

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. (Romans 8:13 KJV)

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. (Romans 13:14 NASB)

Watch and pray

“Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:38 KJV). Jesus spoke this word of warning to His disciples after He found them ‘asleep on the job.’ The warning still stands for every disciple of Jesus in that, if we do not rouse ourselves, stay alert and pray, we too will fall into the same temptation. Those who first heard this warning did not heed it, and all fell away, denying they even knew Jesus. Watch (wake-up, deny the desires of the flesh), and follow your spirit which is now tuned to God’s Spirit.

Fill yourself with His Word

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word” (Psalm 119:9 NIV). When your mind is filled with the Word of God, it is renewed. Old thought patterns which lead to death suddenly give way to patterns which lead to life. You will be surprised to hear yourself quoting God’s Word in situations where you may have once spoken rashly.

Deny ungodliness

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12 NASB). Wouldn’t you think it ridiculous for someone to work all day in the sewer, then come home and take a hot, cleansing shower—only to go put the same smelly, filthy clothes back on? Well, as a Christian, if you do not deny

ungodliness, you are doing virtually the same thing. The Blood of Jesus has washed you. *Don't keep putting on the filth of the world!* The grace of God has appeared to get you clean...live sensibly, righteously and godly in order to stay that way.

Flee temptation

“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22 KJV). Someone once told me, “When I go to the beach, I just have the hardest time not lusting after all those women.” My answer? “Stop going to crowded beaches!” Friend, if you are weak in certain areas, don't keep surrounding yourself with opportunity to stumble. Avoid (FLEE) the temptation! Before long you will see that the Lord is working more of His nature in your life and strengthening you in those very areas. However, the attainment of that nature requires an effort on your part. You will never move forward as long as you are *running to* temptation instead of *fleeing from* it.

Don't lust

“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15 KJV). When you allow yourself to lust, you allow yourself to be drawn away, enticed and tempted into sin—the end of which is death. In the book of Genesis, we see that Eve, the first woman, fell prey to lust:

The *lust of the flesh*: she saw that the fruit was good for food;

The *lust of the eye*: the fruit was pleasing to the eye; and

The *pride of life*: she realized that it could make her wise, (see Genesis 3:6).

The end result was her spiritual death, just as God had warned. **“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”** (1 John 2:16 KJV).

Look for an escape

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13 KJV). If you will turn to God, you will find a way to escape the lusts and temptations of this world. Often, the way of escape can be as simple as turning your head or closing your eyes.

Submit to God

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7 KJV). This is a spiritual law. Just like the law of gravity is a natural law, (if you drop something, it will fall to the ground), if you submit to God and resist the devil...he will flee from you.

Resist the Devil

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9 NKJV). How do you resist the devil? Be sober minded, vigilant in prayer and watchful. If you were in a sleeping bag in the jungles of Africa and you heard a roaring lion close by, would you just roll over and go back to sleep?

Learn Satan’s devices

“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11 KJV). If you submit to God and resist the devil, he will flee from you. However, Satan is a subtle enemy, and he uses many tricks to deceive. He is also a watchful enemy, ready to take any advantage he can find. That is why it is important to know his devices and be cautious not to give him any occasion to trip you.

Choose to hang out with the people of God

“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:24-25 KJV). Moses had been adopted as one of Pharaoh’s own household. He had all the luxuries of that rich kingdom at his fingertips. However, when Moses came to a point of accountability, seeing the suffering of his people and the idolatrous sin of the Egyptians, he choose to be with his people, the people of God, in spite of the suffering.

Obey the Lord

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Romans 6:17 KJV). Obey His commandments. Obey His directions. Obey His will for your life. He knows your form, He created you, He knows what is best for you and where the traps of the enemy are. Jesus will lead you safely home if you obey Him.

“Remember you are not a tree, that can stand alone; you are only a branch, and it is only while you abide in Him, as a branch, that you will flourish.”

–Robert M. McCheyne 1813 – 1843

LOVERS OF PLEASURE

The apostle Paul was straight-forward in his warnings. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul warned of the condition of mankind in the days to come:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (2 Timothy 3:1-5 KJV)

It is imperative that you understand that Paul was not saying that *all pleasure* is wrong. Paul made a distinction, however, regarding those men and women who are “lovers of pleasure” *more* than they are lovers of God. The key is that the “pleasure” spoken of in this scripture is gained at the *expense* of someone else, namely, God.

Lovers of pleasure do what they do at God’s expense. Consider Isaiah 5:11-12, **“Woe to those who rise early in the morning that they may pursue strong drink; who stay up late in the evening that wine may inflame them! And their banquets are accompanied by lyre and harp, by tambourine and flute, and by wine; but they do not pay attention to the deeds of the LORD, nor do they consider the work of His hands”** (NASB).

But let’s take a closer look. I want to cover what it means to be a lover, what it means to be a lover of pleasure, and what it means to be a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God.

What it means to be a lover...

A lover is one who likes or is pleased with something or one who has a tender affection towards something or someone. For instance, have you ever heard the expression, “That guy has a lover on the side”? That means the man is giving his affection and attention to someone else—at his wife’s and his family’s expense. He’s loving another woman, committing adultery.

When you set your affection on something, you are passionate towards whatever that thing is, going after it with great zeal.

What it means to be a lover of pleasure...

Let me first say that any man or woman who works hard providing and caring for their family needs time to relax. Children and teens also need time to play and grow. There’s nothing wrong with a little pleasure and a little recreation. The problem is, *what kind* of pleasure...and to what degree are you indulging in it? God wants us to enjoy ourselves. The

Bible says it is God “**who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy**” (1 Timothy 6:17b NASB). It’s okay to enjoy life.

Then, what does it mean to be a lover of *pleasure*? It means to be *overly affectionate* towards some fleshly attraction. Are you so engrossed in your sport, hobby or friendships that you are consumed by them? Stop and take a good look inside, friend. This is urgent. See what you are consumed with.

What it means to be a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God...

It means simply that *things* have taken the rightful place of *God* in your life. It means you love the creature (yourself) more than you love the Creator (God). You crave *your* comforts more than you crave *God’s* comfort. You see, we were created to bring *Him* pleasure. But are we interested in bringing Him pleasure?

When we don’t fill His ears with praise and thanksgiving...when we don’t fill His gaze with the sight of our eyes turned upward full of admiration and adoration...when we don’t fall on our faces and worship Him for who He is...when we don’t care about the meek and the lowly and the hurting...when we don’t allow the righteousness of His Son to shine through our lives to a lost and dying world...*we are ignoring the things that bring God pleasure!*

What has your affection? What means more to you than anything else? Is it a house? Is it a boat? Is it a car? Is it a boyfriend? Is it a girlfriend? Is it the way you look? Can you stand in front of a mirror, and primp for an hour—but have a hard time reading the Bible for even ten minutes? If so, be careful, those are signs that you love yourself more than anything else! Are you more concerned about how people look at you than how God sees you? If you’re a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, you’ve got your priorities all wrong...but you can change!

Can someone be a lover of God more than a lover of pleasure?

Yes! Jesus said, “**Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind**” (Matthew 22:37 KJV). That means you’re willing to forsake and crucify the affections of the flesh in order to spend time bringing God pleasure. The Bible says, “**Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth**” (Colossians 3:2 KJV).

Determine in your heart to shake off the affections of the world, and become *infatuated* with Jesus. In these days, which Paul warned us about, be a lover of God more than a lover of pleasure. Remember: *The true test of a man’s soul is when he’s alone with God.*

“The heart should be a house of prayer; Christ will not endure to have it a place of merchandise. Either thou must whip these buyers and sellers out, or the Spirit will go out.”

—William Gumall 1617-1679

Part 3

THE LEVELS OF LIFE

And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Him [Jesus], and entreated Him to touch him. And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying His hands upon him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I am seeing them like trees, walking about." Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly. (Mark 8:22-25 NASB)

There is an interesting scenario that takes place in this blind man's life. If you look closely, you will find that his life parallels the Christian life. In Christ, there are what I think of as three levels of life, very similar to what this man experienced.

The Lower Level

This blind man had to be brought to Jesus. He couldn't make it on his own. There were those that prayed, entreating Jesus to touch the man and change his life. Similarly, in the Christian life, someone probably led you to Jesus, or at least had been praying that you would come in contact with Him. This is what I call the lower level of life. It is the beginning, but there is more. **"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"** (John 10:10 KJV).

The Middle Level

Immediately after making contact with Jesus, this man's life changed. Jesus brought him from where he had been and touched his eyes. Suddenly, the man could see. This was definitely a higher level of life than he had experienced before, but Jesus was not content to leave the man in that state. Though he could see, he could not yet see clearly. Likewise, Jesus is not content to leave a born-again Christian at the middle level of life, milking a 'religious experience.' There is more. Get serious and be honest with the Lord about where you are. **"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"** (Philippians 1:6 KJV).

The Upper Level

Notice that the blind man was honest when Jesus asked him what he could see. He could have been so engrossed in the one-time experience that he just walked away with what he had, but he didn't. He was honest about where he was. He got serious with Jesus and Jesus got serious with him. The Lord saw his hunger and his need to receive more, so Jesus touched his eyes once again, and the man began to see everything clearly.

Friend, there is more! There is an abundant 'upper level' of life to be lived by every child of God. Jesus came to take away the sin of the world, thus defeating the devil. Though you may be blessed during your lifetime, Jesus did not hang on that cross to make you wealthy,

get you a nice car or a good job. He came to give you a life of freedom from sin and death (see John 8:32, 36). He came to help you lead a divine, holy life, full of precious promises, (see 1 Peter 1:4). And He came to give you life eternal in His presence (see John 10:28).

Make sure you don't settle for anything less than the upper level life!

"It is not so much praying for direction that one needs as getting near the Lord; and the nearer you are to Him, the clearer will everything appear."

—J. B. Stoney 1815-1897

LEARN TO BE A GOD-SEEKER

"This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Thy face" (Psalm 24:6 NASB)

God is raising up a generation that is 'taking by force' every hindrance that stands in the way of seeking Him. Whether it be an obvious, sinful habit, (smoking, drinking, drugs, pornography, a recreation that consumes more time than it should) or a religious piety without a personal relationship with God—people are getting serious about seeking God.

This is a generation which is advancing against sin and Satan—in the power of the Lord. But what made them this way? What has set them apart, distinguishing them as *God Seekers*? Take a look at some of the characteristics that make a person a God Seeker.

The God Seeker is willing to go after Jesus regardless of the cost.

A man's desperation for the presence of God will melt all preoccupation with self, notoriety, public image and social status. His hunger and thirst, if genuine, will drive him to eat and drink regardless of the opinions of others. He will be willing to be a fool in the sight of his peers in order to be embraced in the arms of the Lord. This is the first characteristic of a true God Seeker.

Do you prize Jesus above all the entanglements in your life, relentlessly pursuing Him regardless of the cost? Can you look Jesus in the eye and say with Peter, “**Behold, we have left everything and followed You...**” (Matthew 19:27 NASB)? The God Seeker will follow God at any cost.

The God Seeker will go after Jesus regardless of how painful the present circumstances may be.

Study the story about the sick woman found in Mark 5:25-34. Though she was bleeding, she mustered her strength and went after Jesus, touching the hem of His garment. You can also reach Him and stop Him in His tracks, gaining His full attention, when you seek Him.

Another example is the thief on the cross. His story is in Luke 23:39-43. He got saved at the last moment, but don’t forget...he did so *with nails driven through his hands and feet*. Keep on seeking the Lord, regardless of the controlling factors in your life.

The God Seeker is driven by a personal hunger that far excels every other desire in life.

Consider Zacchaeus (Luke 19). Friend, he just spent a little time in the true presence of the Lord and all his desires changed—Jesus was suddenly worth more than anything he had possessed because he recognized the only true treasure.

The God Seeker is willing to not only go after Jesus, but also to obey His words.

When you come to Jesus, He will continue to talk to you about your life and your choices because He cares about every detail of your life. The goal of your life in Christ is to become like Him. That means change will come, and obedience must become part of your life.

As recorded in John’s Gospel (John 9:7), when a certain blind man came to Jesus, the Lord spit on the ground, made mud to put on the man’s eyes, and gave him a command: “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam.” The man did so and received his sight. You see, this man had already come to Jesus, but was required to do something in order to see the transformation completed. A God Seeker is willing to obey the words of the Lord.

The God Seeker maintains an open heart, ready to embrace new revelation from the Lord.

Read the account of Apollos as written in Acts 18:24-19:6. He was learned, eloquent and people were listening to him. What’s more, he was a *God Seeker* and not a *self seeker*—therefore, he was open to receive new revelation from the Lord. When told there was more than just the baptism of John, he delighted in the opportunity to know his Lord more fully.

What would be your response in this situation, friend? Would you be teachable, like Apollos? Or would arrogance, pride and insecurity get in the way of your receiving more of the Lord? *Is* your heart open?

The God Seeker is willing to pay the price when persecution comes.

The Bible plainly warns us, **“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”** (2 Timothy 3:12 KJV). If you are living a self-seeking, sinful life, you certainly don’t have to worry about this scripture. But when you become a true God Seeker, you will have your share of persecution. Just remember what Jesus said, **“In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”** (John 16:33b KJV).

“Real satisfaction can only come to the heart of your Lord when you seem to be ‘wasting’ yourself on the Lord, giving too much and getting nothing back for yourself.”

—Watchman Nee 1903-1972

THREE STRIKES AND YOU’RE *IN*

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. (Revelation 12:11 KJV)

Overcomers aren’t born—they are re-born in Christ. It is important to note that *all three* of these elements—not just one or two—must be present to be an *overcomer*:

The Blood of the Lamb

It dripped down that rugged cross onto the cursed soil of Golgotha to redeem a fallen race. If you are born again, your sins have been washed away by the Blood of the Lamb. However, you must be cleansed, restored and renewed *daily*. You need to be able to plead the Blood every time you face the adversary of your soul. Stay cleansed: live holy.

The word of their testimony

A testimony is an up-to-date account of what Jesus has done and *is* doing in your life. It should not be limited to something that happened years ago. It should also be fresh; evidence of your faith and His working in your life today. Compromise of any kind destroys your testimony. You will never have the power to overcome the enemy if you are willingly falling prey to his devices. Holy living will preserve your testimony and give you the second tool needed to overcome.

They loved not their lives unto death

This kind of total devotion to Christ has been considered part of the normal Christian life in the Bible and throughout church history. Those who were martyred for their faith could never be accused of loving the comforts of this world more than their Lord. The love of this life did not stand in competition with their loyalty to Christ. Weak convictions and weak commitment will cause you to be defeated. The attitude of an overcomer is: "Jesus has washed me in His Blood. I love Him with all of my heart, soul and strength and I will not deny Him—though it cost me my life."

"The more ready and prepared the Christian is to suffer for God, or from God, the more God is engaged to take care for him and of him."

—William Gurnall 1617-1679

In closing, I want to say once again that I rejoice with you over your decision. Remember, the truths found in this small book will help you—but only if you apply them. If you get serious about God, He will get serious with you.

"The greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender."

—William Booth 1829-1912

For more information on the ministry of Steve and Jeri Hill or Steve Hill Ministries, please visit our web site:

www.stevehill.org

or email us:

info@stevehill.org

or write us:

**Steve Hill Ministries
P.O. Box 612288
Dallas, TX 75261
U.S.A.**

GOD BLESS YOU!