

How You Can
Live Victoriously

How You Can Live Victoriously

A Handbook For Christian Believers

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CITATION

I dedicate this book to
my wife, Joanne M Smith
Were it not for her, I might never
have become a Bible Christian

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Introduction

The Need for Spiritual Warfare and Scripture Memory

When you see tree branches swaying back and forth, do you wonder why? No, because you know that the wind is blowing. You can't see the wind, but you can see the influence of the wind. If you had an electric cord, with bare wires on one end, and the other end plugged into an electrical outlet on the wall, (don't try this) what would happen if you touched the two bare wires? Right! You would get a severe electrical shock! You can't see electricity, but you would feel the influence of electricity (again, don't try this).

I could give more examples, but here's my point: You and I and every human being that has ever lived, is living now, or will be living in the future are in the middle of a conflict between good and evil—God and Satan! We had nothing to do with starting the battle, but we can't escape from it. Just as we can't see the wind, just as we can't see electricity, in the same way we can't see the evil beings, I think you would agree, we can see the influence of Satan and his legions of demons everywhere in the world right now!

But: good news! God has given to us the ultimate weapon with which you and I can overcome the forces of evil! Our weapon is the Word of God; the Bible! As you'll see in the chapters of this book, I'll show you how easy it is to download (memorize) verses, short passages, even whole chapters from your Bible. If you have never tried to memorize Scripture, you will likely feel a reluctance to do it. That reluctance is caused by Satan and his legions of demons. They do not want you to equip yourself for spiritual warfare.

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Chapter 1

What the Devil Doesn’t Want You to Know

The devil doesn’t want you to know he exists!

Jesus said this about Satan: *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44).

The devil doesn't want you to know this:

- What kryptonite is to Superman
- What light is to cockroaches
- What the Cross is to Dracula
- God's spoken Word is to the devil!

Satan and his legions of demons are powerless and flee in terror when confronted by the supernatural power of the truth of God's Word. This is important to you because the devil is behind most of the problems you are having, and he doesn't want you to know that God promises that you can live free from fear, panic, anxiety, nightmares, worry, and more. God has put His power into His Word. You and I can access that power by speaking God's Word against the devil.

Scriptures showing the power in the Word of God:

"For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18)

"God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:20–21 NKJV).

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Rom. 1:16).

"For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly, but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the

knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

The devil needs God’s permission before he can do anything to you. But the devil has figured out how to “*game the system*” to get God’s permission. It is very legalistic and has to do with you and I having a free will. In biblical times, mighty men of war relied upon their swords to slay their enemies. That’s why God inspired Paul to use a “sword” as a metaphor for a powerful weapon: “*And take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Eph. 6:17).

Here Are Seven Strategies the Devil Uses

1) *Stealth*: As stated above, what the devil doesn’t want you to know is that he exists. If God is the great “I Am,” Satan is the great “I am not”! Jesus, Paul, Peter, and all the New Testament writers knew that demons exist, and they strongly warned us to be on guard and not fall into the devil’s traps.

2) *Ignorance*: Whether you know demons exist or not, you need to understand that the devil doesn’t want you to know about the incredible power of God’s Word and the awesome benefits of doing God’s will in things like Scripture memory

3) *Anesthesia*: If somehow you throw off your ignorance of God’s Word and begin to read it, the devil wants to keep you “anesthetized”—you read the words but they might as well be written in a foreign language. They have no meaning to you. The Gospel is veiled, and you are in danger of perishing.

4) *Unbelief*: If Satan and his legions of demons fail to keep the truth from you, their next strategy is to keep you from taking these truths seriously. What the devil doesn’t want you to know is that he plants thoughts of unbelief in your mind. He tries to get you to think that doing things like Scripture memory are really not important and other things are much more important. He tries to get you to doubt that God exists or doubt the accuracy of the Bible.

5) *Distraction*: If you are still determined to believe and press on, what the devil doesn't want you to know is that he will work to distract you. You'll feel hungry; you'll feel tired; you'll think about your grocery list or your to-do list; someone will call; you'll feel inclined to spend hours surfing the internet, and so forth.

6) *Doubt*: Another thing very high on the list of things the devil doesn't want you to know is that he will try to make you doubt such things as the very authenticity of the Bible. This is despite the fact that Proverbs 30:5 says, "*Every Word of God proves true.*" He wants you to doubt that Jesus said, "*It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle (small grammatical mark) of the law (the Bible) to fail*" (Luke 16:17). The devil even wants you to doubt that you could ever do such an audacious thing as to memorize even one verse of Scripture!

7) *Outright Lies*: What the devil doesn't want you to know is that everything he says is a lie. Oh, he'll tell half-truths, mixing a little bit of truth with a lot of untruth. But those statements are like a pan of chocolate brownies—with dog poop baked into them! You would never eat that if you knew what was in it! Neither should you "eat" the words of the devil.

More About the Strategy of Satan

Satan and his legions of demons go after your mind by putting their lies into your thoughts. Their purpose is to keep you ignorant of God's will for you. But once you begin to take hold of the principles I've shown you here, you'll have a great defense against him. Satan and his legions of demons go after your body by inflicting suffering upon you. Their purpose is to get you to be impatient with God's will for you. But as God said to Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:9, "*My grace is sufficient for you.*"

Satan and his legions of demons attack your will by attempting to sow pride into your life, attempting to make you independent of God's will. But when you filter your actions and even

your thoughts by asking in your heart, “Would this thought (action) grieve the Holy Spirit?” you are, in effect, making the Holy Spirit the gatekeeper of your mind.

Seven Things God Does Want You to Know

1) The devil is real. He hates you because you love Jesus and Jesus loves you. By taking you down, the devil thinks he can hurt Jesus.

2) The devil is behind most of the fear, worry, doubt, guilt, and so forth in your life.

3) Satan’s purpose is remarkably simple: he goes to great lengths with empty promises and lies to get you to choose to live independently from God’s will.

4) God is infinitely more powerful than Satan and all his demons combined, so there is absolutely no reason for you and me to fear them.

5) God will help those who walk in obedience to Him, and who put their complete trust in Him by turning to Him in faith.

6) God does not promise a problem-free life. Actually, He uses your problems to help you grow spiritually.

7) Always remember this: what the devil doesn’t want you to know—but God *does* want you to know—is just how much God’s heart burns with love for you!

It’s important that you realize: you are the “*rope*” in a spiritual tug-of-war! On one end, Satan and his legions of demons are pulling you toward hell, using everything in their bag of tricks to keep you from walking in obedience to God. On the other end, God is working for your good to draw you to Himself, while at the same time respecting your free will. The war between God and Satan is for your soul. The legions of demons, as they always do, are exploiting the fact that God has given you free will. They will stop at nothing to disrupt, discourage, distract, and deflect you

away from allowing God to be the Lord of your life.

The following Scripture is an example of what the devil does: *“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God”* (2 Cor. 4:3–4). In other words, when people read the Bible and it seems to make no sense to them, that’s because of the devil. Somehow, he has the ability to “veil” their minds from the truth of what God wants everyone to know. Does that Scripture alarm you? It alarms me because of all the people I know who are not yet ready to step into eternity. Some think they are ready—but they may not be. Some don’t seem to care. Many have been beaten down by religion and want nothing to do with anything associated with churches. The devil loves that! He so wants to keep you from understanding the Word of God.

Here’s one of the Scriptures where Jesus described what the devil does: *“Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom (the Scripture read from the Bible) and doesn’t understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart”* (Matt. 13:18–19). Take action! Here’s how to arm yourself! Decide now to walk in obedience to God. Begin now to equip yourself for spiritual warfare by first reading the practical, beneficial information I’m presenting here. Equip yourself for spiritual warfare by beginning to put God’s Word into your memory.

One of the reasons God allows troubles in our lives is so that we can show by way of our real-life examples how He works in the life of a believer. The following Scripture shows how God wants each of us to be an encouragement and a comfort to others: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort*

with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:3–4).

Warning! Beware of this trap: The devil is likely putting thoughts into your mind right now, telling you to put off doing the things I’m urging you to do. Or he’s telling you it’s all nonsense or that it’s too much to read. The devil will try to confuse you or even get you to doubt the truth of God’s Word! Don’t listen to that voice. Those thoughts are all lies from the devil! That’s how he manipulates us. At this moment, the most dangerous word in your vocabulary is “tomorrow” (as in, I’ll decide about that—tomorrow).

What I’ve done here is the equivalent of having a personal trainer show you all the types of training equipment and how to use them. But the trainer cannot do the workout for you. Now you must decide: do you want to keep all your fears, anxieties, panic attacks, and nightmares? Now it’s up to you. Victory over the Devil is a partnership with God! In many of our interactions with God, there is a part that we can do, and there is a part that only God can do. And until we do the part that we can do, God will not do the part that only He can do.

The book of James helps us to understand God’s “how to defeat the devil” strategy: *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). There are two separate thoughts here:

- Submit to God. Obey Him. That’s the part you and I must do first.
- Resist the devil. As God’s obedient disciple, you will learn that His power operates

through you.

Sadly, most people ignore the first part and try to figure out how to *“resist the devil”* with their own strength. But they can’t do it.

Now I want to share with you an excerpt from a devotional I’ve been re-reading for years. The

author, Oswald Chambers, has a way of stripping away our pretenses to reveal our true condition, and he always opens my eyes to a better understanding of Scripture. This excerpt is from his classic book, *My Utmost for His Highest*. I highly recommend that you get a copy and read a page every day.

The Authority of Reality:

“Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.” (James 4:8)

It is essential to give people a chance of acting on the truth of God. The responsibility must be left with the individual, you cannot act for him, it must be his own deliberate act, but the evangelical message ought always to lead a man to act. The paralysis of refusing to act leaves a man exactly where he was before; when once he acts, he is never the same.

(From the devotional reading for November 4.)

Notice the phrases Chambers used:

- give people a chance of acting on the truth of God,
- responsibility must be left with the individual,
- message ought always to lead a man to act.

The word *paralysis* describes the condition many are in:

- paralysis of refusing to act.

I am living proof that this next phrase is true:

- when once he acts, he is never the same.

I've quoted a preacher from long ago to help make this point: “Begin learning the Bible so you can do what it says. Along the way, it will transform your life!” There is no neutral ground here.

There are two spiritual kingdoms: heaven and hell. Contrary to popular culture, there is no third kingdom of “just me.” With every thought, with every word we speak, with every action or inaction, we serve either heaven or hell. Jesus said: *“Whoever is not with Me is against Me”* (Matt. 12:30; Luke 11:23).

Everything is a test: God has put before you a multiple-choice test. But notice this—He loves you so much that He’s also given you the correct answer: *“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live”* (Deut. 30:19). So now, you must decide about two things:

Belief: Do you believe the things you’ve read here? Everything is based on the truth of God’s Word. And I don’t mean just mental assent to a set of facts. I mean, “Is your belief a deeply-held conviction that you would die for?”

Importance: Is obeying God by beginning to put His Word into your mind and heart important to you? If it’s important to you, you’ll do it. If it’s not important to you, you won’t do it.

Here’s your part: Just as nobody else can go to the gym and do your workout for you, Just as nobody else can practice the piano for you, In the same way, only you can decide to undergo the discipline of learning to apply principles from the Bible. Once you’ve made the decision to obey God and begin equipping yourself to have victory over the devil, you’ll see that getting Bible verses into you is not as hard or tedious as you might think. Here’s what I do: I read each of the Scriptures I want to memorize once each day!

Would you like some encouragement to get you motivated and to help you get started? You’ll see how at first it will seem like a discipline. But—and here’s the part you cannot see at first—you will begin to experience a desire for God’s Word. You’ll look forward to it. Keep on, and it

becomes a delight! But as I said, you will see this only if you persevere.

Don't Be a "Jellyfish Christian" 

The devil would like you to just drift along as a jellyfish does. Do you know what a jellyfish is like? In outward appearance, there is a certain beauty to them. But look at what they're really like and what they do:

- They're flimsy.
- They're weak.
- They're spineless; they have no backbone; they can't stand up for anything.
- They just drift along with the prevailing currents. You might say they "go with the flow."
- With their tentacles, they sting with venom whatever gets in their way.
- With those same tentacles, they reach out and grab what they want.
- You cannot negotiate or compromise with a jellyfish. They are creatures of instinct.

There are many people who identify themselves as Christians but are a lot like that jellyfish.

"But how can we know who they are?" Here is the test: What is your "instinctive reaction" when adversity strikes? Do you respond with anger and venomous rage? Or, do you respond by way of a gentle and quiet spirit? My friend, that is the test! Where you go first is what you truly believe!

What does God want? He wants us to live in harmony with His Word.

Examples:

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

But instead, we nearly always "*wrestle against flesh and blood*"; we fight among

ourselves.

“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil” (Eph. 4:26–27).

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:19–20).

We should be

- quick to hear God’s point of view;
- slow to speak my point of view; and
- slow to anger—when my point of view differs from God’s point of view.

The more Scripture I know, the more God is able to use it to teach me, reprove me, correct me, and train me in regard to my own behavior. So, instead of giving “opportunity to the devil,” I’m giving permission to *God*. Good plan, yes?

Make the right decision. Don’t let the devil win!

Chapter 2

How to Eliminate Unwanted Thoughts

“For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor.10:4–5).

“Don’t Think About a Pink Elephant!”

Have you ever played that silly game? Someone says, “Don’t think about a pink elephant.” And what happens? No matter how hard you try, you just can’t stop thinking about pink elephants! Clearly, then, trying harder doesn’t work. (You probably already knew that, right?) Actually, that “try-harder” thing is one of Satan’s favorite schemes to make us dance to his tune. It goes something like this:

- Try harder
- Get it right
- Do it better
- Be perfect
- Fail!
- Start over
- Try harder
- Get it right
- and so forth until you wear yourself out and give up.

The devil loves this! He knows that eventually you will fail. You will plunge into despair, doubt, fear, and so on, as the unwanted thoughts resume their parade through the “video and audio” pathways of your mind. The unwanted thoughts bind you, and you become their prisoner once again. None of that has to happen!

Here is an actual comment from someone who read this article:

“This is a blessing for me. I have been having horrible thoughts for a month now. I have offended the Lord and treated Him horribly. But I always say sorry, then have the same recurring horrible thoughts. And I “try harder” to stop these thoughts instead of arming myself with the

*Word of God. Thank you, for this **article** truly is a blessing. I pray that God will forgive me for all I have done and that these horrible thoughts will go away permanently. God bless you.”*

My goal: to show you four things:

Here's What Works: The permanent solution: replace unwanted thoughts with God's thoughts.

What God Promises: What His Word says you can do about unwanted thoughts.

Why This Is Important: Why and how are these unwanted thoughts tormenting you?

How to Get Relief: how you can take hold of the relief God has promised.

1. Here's what works:

This true anecdote illustrates the concept: replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts. I know a man whose life is really messed up. He has fallen on very hard times. He has lost his job, lost his family, and lost his peace and joy. No surprise, then, that his mind is plagued with all kinds of unwanted thoughts.

His one activity that he enjoys is playing football. Although he is about fifty years old, he keeps himself in remarkably good physical condition, so he can participate in a semi-pro football league. One day I asked him, “when you're in the middle of a game, and you're staring down an opponent as you wait for the ball to be snapped, where are those unwanted thoughts then?”

He looked at me with astonishment! “they're gone!,” he exclaimed.

“You have,” I replied, “just proven that it is possible to be free from the torment of unwanted thoughts!”

Here's why: as he concentrated on what he was about to do to his opponent, those football thoughts crowded out all of his negative unwanted thoughts. For a little while at least, he was free! Of course in his case, the freedom only lasted until the game was over. Then all that burden

flooded right back into his mind.

Here's what I said to him next: "You need a permanent solution. You need to have an arsenal of thoughts that you can instantly call to mind, thoughts that are so powerful they will easily and continually push out all the unwanted thoughts. This is the supernatural solution to your supernatural problem!"

The good news is that such a solution exists. God has it, and He offers it to you.

2. What God promises:

Let me restate the main text from the top of this article, and then show you the details: "*For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ*" (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

Here are the details:

- arguments—arguments take place in your mind.
- every lofty opinion—opinions take place in your mind.
- The knowledge of God—takes place in your mind.
- Take every thought captive—thoughts take place in your mind.

Wouldn't you agree: Paul is saying that the Word of God has divine power and that this power built into the Word of God is our supernatural weapon against all the lies, accusations, and torments that Satan would otherwise be allowed to inflict upon us!

Paul also wrote: "*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things*" (Phil. 4:8) and

"For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's

gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11–12). By using the power God has put into His Word, you and I can take unwanted thoughts captive, rather than having the unwanted thoughts taking us captive!

Scriptures Showing the Power in the Word of God:

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

The Word of God seems foolish to many. In reality, it contains the power of God!

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever Amen” (Eph. 3:29–21 NKJV).

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

“For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

That’s what God inspired Paul to write to us about taking unwanted thoughts captive.

Key Principle:

Our weapon against the devil is the Word of God.

When you choose to partner with God and begin to arm yourself against the devil by internalizing (memorizing) even just a few Bible verses, He extends His divine “protective shield” around you.

The Holy Spirit becomes the gatekeeper of your mind!

That is what God has promised to those who choose to partner with Him.

3. Why this is important:

- Unwanted thoughts are almost always from the devil.
- Unwanted thoughts that have come into your mind such as:
- Unwanted thoughts of lust
- Negative emotions (anger, rage, revenge, etc.)
- Unwanted thoughts of despair (worry, doubt, panic, fear, etc.)
- Unwanted thoughts that have you putting yourself down (“I’m such a loser”; “nobody

cares about me”; “I can’t do anything right”)

Those unwanted thoughts and many others are all very likely put into your mind by a demon.

God allows this because we have a free will. God did not intend to create robotic worshipers that are hard-wired to say what He wants to hear. He wants genuine worshipers.

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him” (John 4:23).

Our free will includes the freedom to reject Him.

How is the devil able to get permission to torment us?

The following excerpts from chapters 1 and 2 of the book of Job illustrate how Satan is able somehow to get permission from God.

Job 1:6–22 says:

“Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, also came among them The Lord said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the Lord and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” Then Satan answered the Lord and said, “Does Job fear God for no reason? Have you not put a hedge around him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But stretch out your hand and touch all that he has, and he will curse you to your face.” And the Lord said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your hand. Only against him do not stretch out your hand.” So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord.

Satan Takes Job’s Property and Children

Now there was a day when his sons and daughters were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother’s house, and there came a messenger to Job and said, “The oxen were plowing and the donkeys feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” while he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The fire of God fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the servants and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” While he was yet speaking, there came another and said, “The Chaldeans formed three groups and made a raid on the camels and took them and struck down the servants with the edge of the sword, and I alone have escaped to tell you.” While he was yet speaking, there came another and said “Your sons and daughters

were eating and drinking wine in their oldest brother's house, and behold, a great wind came across the wilderness and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young people, and they are dead, and I alone have escaped to tell you." Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.

Job 2:1–10 tells us:

Satan Attacks Job's Health

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said to Satan, "From where have you come?" Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.

And the Lord to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil? He still holds fast to his integrity, although you incited me against him to destroy him without reason."

Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out your hand and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face." And the Lord said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand; only spare his life."

So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a piece of broken pottery

with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes. Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

In spite of all that, it is possible to be free from unwanted thoughts.

But how?

4. How to get relief— by partnering with God and thus apply the power of His Word.

Here are a couple of clues. This is all about what comes into your mind: *“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he”* (Prov. 23:7a AMP). I’ll say it again: this is all about what comes into your mind.

That’s the battleground. God would love for you to partner with Him so that He can help rid your mind of unwanted thoughts.

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2b).

The process is not by “trying harder” to stop unwanted thoughts. Instead, challenge the source of the unwanted thoughts by filtering them through the “grid” of the Word of God. Discern by asking yourself, is it a thought that would draw you nearer to God? Or is it instead a thought from the pit of hell. When you know you are “hearing” unwanted thoughts from the devil, you can remove them—or rather, allow God to remove them—using the power of His Word.

Paul described the weapons of our warfare in the book of Ephesians. As you can see, Paul says nothing about “trying harder.” Rather, he talks about using principles of the Word of God.

The whole armor of God:

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the

cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak. (Eph. 6:10–20)

You and I have a part in the solution. Jesus Himself demonstrated for us how to do the part that He wants you (and me and all of His followers) to do. After fasting for forty days, Satan tried to tempt Jesus. But each time, Jesus deflected the temptation by quoting from Scripture. You can read the details of this encounter here:

The Temptation of Jesus

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on

the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test’”
Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, ‘All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

If Jesus—who created the universe—chose to quote the Word of God in order to put the devil in his place, what would make me think that I could overcome the devil all by myself without any help from God?

Satan and his legions of demons tempt us by putting thoughts into our minds. Their purpose is to deceive us into doing things that lead us away from God and ultimately to hell. But it doesn't have to happen that way. With God's help, you can live free from the torment of unwanted thoughts that don't belong in your mind. But you can't stop these unwanted thoughts by your own strength for very long. You need help from God. And He has promised to help you as a Christian believer. *“For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ”* (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

The key passage should give you great hope.

- First of all, we know that God inspired the apostle Paul to write that passage. That means

God wanted you to know this.

- Second, because it's in the Bible, it's possible! You can keep unwanted thoughts out if you are a Bible-believing Christian.

- Third, it shows us that we need God's help to eliminate unwanted thoughts permanently! Satan and his legions of demons come to us uninvited. God allows that because he has given us a free will. We must choose to believe in Him and follow Him. That's why He didn't make programmed robots that speak programmed words. But because we have a free will, we have to ask God for His help. There is a part that you must do when you partner with God. When you do your part, God will do the part that only He can do.

Here are some things I have learned about controlling the thoughts that go into my mind. It's all biblical and very effective. I write them with the desire that they would be spread widely around and used by Christian believers everywhere. We need Him. This is so serious! *“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few”* (Matt. 7:13–14).

Here's What To Do: Start by Choosing to Believe in God.

Trust Him that He will never ask you to do something that you cannot do. He will always make available to you the resources to accomplish what He has commanded. But he won't do the part that you can do. Ultimately, He wants your permission to allow Him to accomplish His work here on this earth through you. Don't hold back any longer. Give yourself to Him, and He'll do things through you that you cannot imagine. I urge you to read, study, and begin to learn and apply the thoughts and Scriptures written here. Ask God to help you apply them into your life. If you'll do that, I can assure you on the authority of the Word of God, He will set you free from the torment of thoughts you know should not be in your mind.

Also, confess all known sin! *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:8–9). Satan is counting on us to ignore verse 9 and not confess our sins.

He knows that as long as we are out of fellowship with God, the door is wide open for him to get permission to torment us.

Read the next Scripture and you’ll see how that happens:

“And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God” (Rev. 12:10). This cycle of temptation, accusation, and torment goes on and on, day and night. While we are out of fellowship with God, we give Satan an opportunity to accuse us in the court of heaven and get permission to torment us. It all comes down to knowing His Word. Jesus said: *“If you remain in My Word, you will truly be My disciples and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free”* (John 8:31b–32). That implies that if we choose not to remain in His Word, we won’t be set free! Instead, we will remain in bondage to the devil!

God is asking you to take a step of faith: first by reading this book, then by choosing to believe it and act as would a person who truly believes that these things could become a reality in their life. It may seem impossible to you, but that’s where faith begins, right? If you could see all the dots connected, it wouldn’t be faith. I believe God deliberately sets things up that way. He wants you to surrender to Him. It’s time to do that. read this, then do it!

Summary: Seven Things to Consider:

1. Good news: It truly is possible to live free from thoughts you do not want to have in your

mind! You can be successful! You can! This includes lustful thoughts (which, if not captured and banished quickly, will soon lead to lustful actions). Especially for us men, it's critically important that we take hold of this. God's Word commands us to come up to a higher level of holiness.

At the gym where I work out, there are sometimes young, attractive women dressed very provocatively. I can't begin to count the number of times I have whispered the following Scripture to myself: *"I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?"* (Job 31:1). And is there anywhere a man who has not done what Jesus is speaking of in the next verse? *"But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:28).

But here's the "good news" part: God never commands us to do something without giving us the means to do it.

However, we have to do it His way. As is often true, there is a part that we have to do before God will do the part only He can do. It's that last part—where God helps us after we've done our part—that we need. Which brings us to the next point:

2. But: You cannot do it on your own by "trying harder."

That "try-harder" thing is a main component of Satan's "gospel." It doesn't work for very long; eventually, it always fails. Then Satan uses your failure to condemn you, to make you feel like a loser. You try again, and the cycle repeats. You become discouraged and you ultimately quit. This is a very bad plan!

This may appear to contradict item 1, but it really doesn't. It just means you can't be victorious on your own. You need supernatural help.

3. Really good news: God longs to partner with you to help you live a life of victory. Because you have a free will, God will not force His help upon you. You have to ask Him. In order to partner with you, God requires your obedience. It does no good to try to shut the devil out in one area of your life, while simultaneously opening doors for him in other areas.

4. But you must submit to God's authority in all areas of life.

James wrote, "*Submit yourselves therefore to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you*"

(James 4:7).

You have to put first things first: submit to God first, then with the power of His Spirit, you can easily resist the devil.

5. More good news (which doesn't look like good news at first): there isn't a "quick-fix" for this.

It's going to take time. You have to do the part that you can do before God will do the part only

He can do. This is spiritual warfare, and you have to learn some things first. You need to equip

yourself with Bible principles. As you do so, you must make up your mind—set your mind—to

choose to respond by using those "weapons" throughout every day.

Here's where many Christians lose the battle. They haven't adequately equipped themselves with

"The sword of the Spirit, the Word of God" (Eph. 6:17). This is what works: fill your mind so

full of God's thoughts (that's what Bible verses are) that the devil cannot get a word in

edgewise! When you "*submit to God*" (James 4:7) and "*renew your mind*" (Rom. 12:2), be

prepared to be astonished! God will "manifest Himself to you" (John 14:21). As you

systematically feed on the Word of God (see Matt. 4:4), you will come alive spiritually. The

power of God will begin to operate in you, because the Word of God is God (see John 1:1).

Acts 1:8 says, "*You will receive power*" which the Bible defines as "*more and more grace power*

of the Holy Spirit to meet this evil tendency) (James 4:6 AMP). Then you'll be able to "*Take*

every thought captive" (2 Cor. 10:5). The Holy Spirit becomes the gatekeeper of your mind!

6. Start small if you must—but start!

If you've done little or no Scripture learning, start out with one or two short verses written on

recipe cards; read them as little as once a day; it takes just a minute or two. It may take days or

even weeks. Let it take time. Eventually, you will be able to recite them by heart. A couple of supporting Scriptures for you: Psalm 119:11 says, *“I have hidden Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You,”* and Deuteronomy 6:6 says, *“These words which, I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.”* Anyone who can read can do this. If you find yourself thinking you don’t have time for that, it’s time to review your priorities.

According to 2 Timothy 1:7, God has given you *“a sound mind.”* Indeed, 1 Corinthians 2:16 says you have *“the mind of Christ.”* If you can remember your name, your address, your phone number, your Social Security number, the names and birthdays of your family members, and so forth, you can do this. If you’re not doing this or something like this to learn Scripture, at least be honest before God and admit, *“I won’t!”* When the devil is messing with your mind, fight back with: *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you”* (Isa. 43:2).

The previous verse refers to how God is always with you, especially during difficult times. The metaphors of “water” and “fire” refer to our trials in life. *“Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world”* (1 John 4:4b). In 1 John 4:4, “He who is in you,” of course refers to God. “He who is in the world” refers to the devil. The idea is: God is more powerful than all the demons combined. After all He created them!

“When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?” (Ps. 56:3–4).

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion

forever” (Ps. 73:25–26).

7. There is no neutral ground here!

Jesus said, *“Whoever is not with me is against me”* (Matt. 12:30, Luke 11:23).

The whole kingdom of heaven and the whole kingdom of hell are watching to see which choice you make.

God has given each of us a multiple-choice test.

But look: He’s also given us the correct answer:

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore Choose life, that you and your offspring may live” (Deut. 30:19).

You have a free will; you have a sound mind! But you have to make the decision.

Make it a good one.

Chapter 3

You Get the Power of God

When You Speak the Word of God

Speak the Word of God, and your voice becomes His voice.

Dead religion gives you the checklist:

1. Thou shalt do all these things.
2. Thou shalt not do those things.

The problem is religion only beats you over the head with the rules but gives you no power to succeed. Then it heaps shame and guilt upon you when you fail to live up to its standards. The

devil loves this because it serves his kingdom very well. Just as the mirror you look into when you get up in the morning only shows you how much you need to wash your face and comb or brush your hair, in the same way, the “Law” only reveals your sin problem but does nothing to help you to overcome the sin problem.

I was raised in such a religion, one that heavily emphasizes rites and rituals but teaches nothing about how to use the Bible for practical application. So, like most of the members of this religion, I was totally illiterate regarding the Bible. I was in my forties when I began listening to Bible teaching on the radio. I began to discover how the Bible is actually full of wisdom for everyday life, such as the following principle:

When people hear someone speak the Word of God they are hearing Jesus speak.

Key Supporting Verse: *“He who hears you hears me and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me”* (Luke 10:16a).

This is important because Jesus left us here so that we would become His disciples. His purpose is to work through each of us to continue the work of spreading the Gospel Truth that He began when He was here.

And what was it that Jesus did?: He spoke, He taught.

Jesus taught all of us a very important principle in that first part of Luke 10:16. When people hear a follower of Jesus (could be you or me) as we speak the Word of God (anything in the Bible), the listeners are hearing Jesus speaking through the voice of the person. .

However, if you read the verse in context, you’ll see that Jesus commissioned those who had dedicated their lives to doing His work. There is no indication that the power of His spoken Word is available to unbelievers or even casual, cultural Christians.

Nevertheless, the good news for us is that there is great power in the Word of God. This is not

like fictional characters who, by way of special effects, can cause “supernatural” things to happen. That’s fiction. But the Word of God is not fiction.

Biblical Principle:

The Word of God contains the power of God. Here’s how that is true:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1)

Might I also add: not only is it Gospel Truth that “the Word was God,” but also that the Word of God is now, and always will be God.

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14)

I don’t understand the “how” of those words, but I believe that somehow God literally is His Word. As someone has said, the Bible is the “*written Word,*” and Jesus is the “*living Word.*”

Scriptures showing the power in the Word of God: *“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).* The Word of God seems foolish to many. In reality, it contains the power of God. *“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7).*

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3:20–21).

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

“for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4–5).

It may “feel” awkward, at first, to speak God’s Word out loud in the presence of others. Don’t let that stop you. Don’t be ashamed. Those “feelings” were likely put into you by a demon hoping to get you to back down and not give voice to what they hate. On the contrary, speak out boldly. Take a step of faith and open your mouth, not because of what you feel, but because of what you know. Put the devil in his place, and you will soon become aware of the presence of God as never before.

But you can’t give to others what you do not have. That’s why I keep banging the “Scripture memory” drum. The devil does not pull up a chair and wait while you go and find your Bible to search for a verse. Without God’s Word “in your heart,” you are like a soldier being shoved into an intense battle zone with no training, and thus without a clue as to how to use the weapons of warfare. And believe me, you are in a battle. Here’s an example of how Jesus applied the principle of quoting Scripture when being harassed by the devil. He modeled it for us as an example of how we can use the spoken Word of God to rebuke the devil:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “He will command his angels concerning you,” and “On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall

not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him “Be gone, Satan. For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him. (Matt. 4:1–11)

I don’t want to move on without calling your attention to the fact that the devil waited until Jesus was at His weakest point, having fasted for forty days, when he made his run at Jesus. That’s the way devils operate. They are bullies, and bullies exploit us at our times of greatest weakness. In that passage, Jesus demonstrated for us how the spoken Word has power over temptations of the devil.

Do you realize how awesome and important that is? You speak an appropriate Scripture passage, and in doing so, you put the lie to whatever the devil is trying to get you to believe and act on.

When you or I do that, the devil has to obey. Why? Because to the devil, there is no difference between Jesus speaking the Word and you or I speaking the Word. The devil feels the power and does what he’s told. The power of God is in His Word, and we access that power when we speak the Word of God.

In the following passage God revealed a glimpse of the grandeur and majesty with which He regards His spoken Word:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa. 55:10–11)

God spoke, and look what happened:

He spoke—and the universe came into existence.

He spoke through Moses—and the Red Sea parted.

He spoke—and the lepers were made clean.

He spoke—and Lazarus rose from the dead.

He spoke—and water turned into wine.

He spoke—and multitudes were fed.

He spoke—and the blind could see, the dumb could speak, the deaf could hear, and the crippled, the lame, the paralyzed, and the bleeding were healed.

He spoke *“It is finished.”*—and thereby threw open the gates of heaven for all who believe in Him and obey Him.

By way of the story of the valley of the dry bones, God has even revealed to us a “how-to” process for accessing the power of His Word, thus giving us a part in His process of bringing about things that would be impossible without Him:

The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord God, You know.” Then He said to me, “Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. “Thus says the Lord God to these bones:

Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.”

So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them.

Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”

So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. (Ezek. 37:1–10)

The first thing He told the prophet Ezekiel to do was to “Hear the Word of the Lord.” God is saying to the prophet (and to us), “This is what I want you to say. Now, say it!” This was an impossible situation: bringing life back into a bunch of bones. But not just any old bones; dry bones! God instructed a mere mortal—just like any one of us—to speak words that He gave them. The first thing God wants us to do when facing an “impossible” situation is to begin to speak His Word over it.

He’s given us the words to say. They’re all right there, in the Bible. And the more of the Bible passages we know, the better equipped we are for victory over the devil. The devil will not pull up a chair and wait patiently while you look up a verse or call a friend. That brings me to the point I’ve been laboring to make all along. You cannot speak God’s Word over your situation unless you know His Word. In the heat of the battle, when the devil has you whimpering in fear

and is freaking you out to the max, there's no time to try to look it up in your Bible or call a friend. No, you have to know God's Word. Scripture memory is the answer.

Recall that in Isaiah 55:11 (quoted earlier) God said His Word "*shall accomplish that which I purpose.*" We, as His ambassadors, are called to do what He would do if He were here in the flesh. We're instructed to do His work. That likely does not include requesting a new car or thinking we are empowered to call down the wrath of heaven upon someone we don't like! So I'll say it again: you cannot know what God would do until you have a good grasp of what He has said in His Word. Think of it like this: Suppose you were in desperate need of legal help. Let's imagine you've been unjustly accused of a serious crime, but the evidence against you appears overwhelming. Which of these people would you rather have as your advocate?

A. Someone who is "interested in" the law and plans to go to law school.

B. A seasoned, top-notch defense attorney with decades of experience.

Right, so would I.

Speaking for myself, I want to be the biblical equivalent of that top-notch attorney. I'm gladly paying the price to reach that goal. It's not a burden; it's a joy and a delight. How about you?

Chapter 4

Fear Is Caused by the Devil

Most of your fear is caused by the devil, not by your circumstances. Here are perhaps the most important things to know about fear: it is not just a physiological response to circumstances. Fear is also a spiritual phenomenon, inflicted upon you by the devil. God built a "flight-or-fight" mechanism into you for your protection. The rush of adrenaline known as a "panic attack" will also, in the face of real danger, give you an instant boost of strength. But Satan and his legions of

demons, as they always do, have taken God's gift and have corrupted it by using it against you. They do it by planting thoughts into your mind, thoughts of impending disaster and doom. They are behind all of those "what if" questions that tie you in knots of fear. That fear is caused by the devil! Paul wrote: *"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms"* (Eph. 6:12).

The "voice" you "hear" in your thoughts sounds like *your* voice. But often, it isn't. It may be the voice of a demon, impersonating you by "whispering" thoughts into your mind. In this way, demons are able to deceive you into believing their lies. But the good news is that God has given us the ultimate weapon against the devil: His Words—the Bible. The following is how to do it. Jesus modeled for us how to defeat the devil. When He was at his weakest point as a human being, after fasting for forty days, the devil tried three times to tempt Him. Each time, Jesus responded by quoting Scripture. (He could do that because He had done His Scripture memory as a boy.) As a result, when the devil tempted Jesus to turn stones into loaves of bread, here's what He did:

The Temptation of Jesus

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.'" But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you

strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan. For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.”

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.”

(Matt. 4:1–11)

I urge you to read the entire passage carefully. Notice: Jesus used the same method to defeat the devil in each case. He said, “It is written . . .” followed by a passage from Scripture.

Because fear is caused by the devil, we need to know how to stand firm against him. Here are ten practical lessons Jesus demonstrated for us in that encounter with the devil:

- He was able to quote from the Word because He had done Scripture memory as a boy.
- He showed how the Word of God is food to our spirits.
- We merely exist without the Word of God.
- We live by internalizing the Word of God.
- He declares that every Word in the Bible is important.
- He declares that the Scripture is indeed from God.
- He demonstrates the power of speaking Scripture out loud.
- His process: First, recognize the devil’s lie; is the thought in your mind in harmony with

God’s Word or not? and second, squelch/nullify the lie by speaking principles of Truth from God’s Word.

- The Word of God is demon repellent; Jesus used it to send the devil away.

10. Satan and his legions of demons are bullies; they tend to pick on us when we are at our weakest. But we are never too weak to speak the Word of God if we know it.

The battle takes place in our minds. We win the battle with Scripture! So when you are feeling fearful, do what I did and quote the following verse. Show the devil that you know God is right there with you, and that you're calling on Him to help you in your hour of testing: *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you"* (Isa. 43:2). In that verse, the references to "passing through water" and "walking through fire" are poetic references to the trials we must all pass through. You'll notice it doesn't say "if"; it says "when." But it also says you will go "through." The trial will be hard, but it will not last forever. That's a promise from God. Our job is to stand firm. This is the process God uses to strengthen your faith in Him.

Jesus is not expecting us to be perfect. None of us can be. But when you walk with God—when your life is marked by steady progress in obedience to Him—your life will begin to show the "fruit" of your relationship with Him: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law"* (Gal. 5:22–23).

The new "you" will hardly recognize the old "you."

Your trial will not last forever. That's a promise from God. Our job is to "remain under." This is the process God uses to strengthen our faith in Him. This isn't just a theory to me. I know what I'm talking about. I'm living in this mode right now.

Prayer: *"Heavenly Father, I praise You for showing me this truth about Satan and his legions of*

demons. Now that I know that they are the instigators of the fear I've had, I know exactly what to do. The next time fear even thinks about tormenting me, I won't listen to those lies. I'll quickly turn to You and rely on Your promises for help and comfort."

Chapter 5

Why You Have No Hunger for God's Word

Spiritual hunger works just the opposite of natural hunger. A "Christian" without Bible knowledge is like a "driver" who has never seen a car. Here's what committed Christians are declaring to God: *"Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts"* (Jer. 15:16). Having God's Word become the joy of your life is truly a worthy goal, wouldn't you agree? But nobody starts life hungry for the Word of God.

We start life physically hungry—but spiritually indifferent. Every parent will agree with this: every newborn baby knows instinctively what to do to get fed. But spiritually, there's nothing in us that causes us to seek spiritual things, such as biblical principles and Scripture memory. If God had built an instinct into us that compelled us to do Scripture memory, for example, wouldn't that contradict our free will? As I began writing this article, I intended to begin by saying that we are clueless about Scripture memory and biblical principles at first. But then I realized: there actually are clues. Consider: when God interacted directly with His people in biblical times, He allowed them to go through incredibly difficult circumstances. Through their trials and victories, He patiently instructed them, corrected them, warned them, and rebuked them. Then He supernaturally caused other men (prophets) to write the stories about His people. Today, those writings are in the Old Testament section of the Bible.

With that in place, God inspired His New Testament scribes to write letters that help us to

understand. Thus, Paul wrote: *“These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us”* (1 Cor. 10:11). Genius, yes? So, we’re not clueless. We have many clues available to us. Our assignment is to discover the clues, and begin learning the principles they point to. Then, with the power of His grace, God wants us to begin learning to live according to His principles. He calls that process “sanctification.”

I have to be honest and admit: I knew none of this, well into my adult years. Worse, I stubbornly resisted doing things like Scripture memory and learning the Bible. Back then, you might say I didn’t know. But I didn’t know that I didn’t know. Do you understand what I mean there? Just as teenagers seem to “know it all,” I used to think I knew all the spiritual “facts” I needed to know. Now I realize that all I had then was a bit of religious “head knowledge.” I was giving mental assent to a set of data. It made no difference in my life.

Can you imagine handing the keys to your car over to a teenager who has had no driver training and no knowledge of traffic laws? Or, can you imagine putting someone into a soldier’s uniform, handing them a weapon, and dropping them into fierce combat—without any training? If you understand how ridiculous those things would be, then you’ll understand how ill-equipped I was to travel the roads of life and fight the spiritual battles of life. And Satan loved it. He hates that I’m writing these things now. So, here’s a question: what do I mean by “clues” from the Bible?

Here’s an example:

God has told us that what natural food is to our bodies, His Word is to our spiritual beings. *“So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord”* (Deut. 8:3). Just as the food we eat nourishes our bodies, the Word of God nourishes our souls. That being true, why do so few

people do Scripture memory and apply biblical principles? I found a reference that explains why most of us do not start out with a thirst for Scripture memory. In his book, *A Thirst For God* (Zondervan, 1980) author Sherwood Eliot Wirt relates the words of a preacher he had heard years earlier: “Spiritual hunger works just opposite from physical hunger. When we are physically hungry, we eat and satisfy our appetites and cease to be hungry. But when we are spiritually undernourished and are then given a feast of good spiritual food, it makes us hungrier than ever. Thus the more we learn about God’s love, the more we want to know; we can’t get enough.”

The reverse, Wirt said, is also true. Quoting the same pastor, he writes: “When we are physically hungry and miss a meal, our appetite becomes ravenous. But if time passes and we receive no spiritual food, we may lose our appetite for it. Malnutrition sets in and we cease to care.”

Let’s examine hunger:

1. Physical hunger: you eat, and even the most gluttonous overeater eventually cannot eat another bite.
2. Spiritual hunger: you feast on the Word of God and become hungrier than ever.

As the author put it, “the more we learn about God’s love [that’s scripture memory] the more we want to know; we can’t get enough.” Also, with physical hunger, if we miss a meal, we become ravenously hungry. If we receive no spiritual food, three things happen: We lose any appetite for Scripture memory that we might have had, malnutrition sets in, and we cease to care. I can see myself—the way I once was. I grew up thinking that all God asked of me was to sit in a pew in a Catholic church for an hour every Sunday. Biblically, I was indifferent to God. He made no difference in my life. Scripture memory? Spiritual hunger? What are they? That is how I used to be.

Now, I know too many people who are just like that. It's easy to just ride comfortably along on the "conveyor belt of life," never realizing that we were supposed to be drawing near to God through His Word. So, what can we do? Here's what I'm attempting to do right now, by way of writing these things: "*save others by snatching them out of the fire*" (Jude 23).

Here are two important truths:

1. The Word of God is demon repellent. The more Scripture memory you do, the more power you have with which to stand firm against the devil.
2. Don't decide whether or not to do Scripture memory based upon what your feelings are telling you. If you feel no hunger for the Word of God and your inclination is to not do it, realize this: those thoughts and feelings are from the devil. By faith, choose to begin force-feeding yourself on the Word of God: "*but the people who know their God shall stand firm and take action*" (Dan. 11:23).

Chapter 6

Think God's Thoughts to Overcome Fear and Anxiety

Did you know this? You and I can think God's thoughts. "*You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You because he trusts in You*" (Isa. 26:3). Just look at that verse: when your thoughts line up with God's thoughts; when you have not just memorized His Word but internalized it by allowing God to work it into your heart, God gives you His peace, perfect peace. Jesus said: "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid*" (John 14:27).

The world may give you peace—maybe—when your circumstances are flying high. But when you've surrendered your life to Jesus, He gives you "*peace that surpasses all understanding*"

Here's an example from the book of Acts of what a totally trusting and surrendered life looks like: Paul and Silas did something good, but rather than being thanked, they were severely punished and put into prison. Notice how they responded. The lesson for us today is that we, too, should respond as they did:

Paul and Silas in Prison

As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

The Philippian jailer converted:

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them, and suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were opened, and

everyone's bonds were unfastened. When the jailer woke and saw that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here."

And the jailer called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.

But when it was day, the magistrates sent the police, saying, "Let those men go." And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Therefore come out now and go in peace." But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No. Let them come themselves and take us out." The police reported these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens. So they came and apologized to them. And they took them out and asked them to leave the city. So they went out of the prison and visited Lydia. And when they had seen the brothers, they encouraged them and departed.

(Acts 16:16–40 ESV)

After casting a demon out of a woman who was harassing them, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison. They had every reason to believe they would be executed the next day. So, what were

they doing that night? Were they freaking out? No way. They were singing to the Lord. They set a powerful example for the other prisoners and the jailer, and for us. That's how I want to be able to respond to adversity. Anyone who has been troubled longs for perfect peace.

And where does peace come from? Paul says in Galatians 5:22 that the fruit of my relationship with God is: "love, joy, peace"—there it is. So peace is a fruit of (a result of) closeness with Him.

But again, the offer is conditional. God offers perfect peace to those "whose mind is stayed on [focused on or fixed on] Him." How to apply the principle: Here are several things I've found to be very beneficial. I urge you to do the same: choose to keep God near the forefront of your mind throughout each day. To say it another way: *think God's thoughts*. When you do this, it quickly becomes a habit. Choose to begin the practice of praise. Praise God for your life; praise Him for the food in your kitchen; praise Him for your car; praise Him for the money in your bank account; praise him for your health, and so forth. (That's just a "starter list." Add your own praises throughout the day.)

- Choose to make God your top priority. One way I do this is by going to bed early so I can get up early and spend time doing my own Scripture memory. One might say I'm tithing my time, giving God the first-fruits of each day.

- Choose to preach His Word to yourself regularly throughout the day. It's amazing how, once you've done even a small amount of Scripture memory, God will bring to your mind passages He wants you to apply in a particular situation.

- Choose to read through Scripture memory verses out loud. Romans 10:17 says, "*faith comes by hearing the Word of God.*"

- Choose to respond to life's situations with praise to God at all times. Again, it amazes me

how, when I do that, the “weight” of my problem gets smaller and smaller.

- Choose to trust God by going to the truth of Scripture every time you hear a “what if” question or a lie from Satan. God does not deal in what-ifs in our lives. He knows exactly what’s going to happen.

Therefore, choose to believe that God is trustworthy, that He is good, and that He can handle whatever comes up. Personally, I’ve found that trusting in myself has not given me much peace. Every verse in the Bible began in the eternity past as a thought in the mind of God.

So, when you put His thoughts into your mind, you are literally thinking God’s thoughts. Then, when the devil tries to push his lies into your mind, the superior power of God’s thoughts helps you to overcome those wicked lies. When you saturate your mind with Bible verses, when you think God’s thoughts, the devil cannot get a word in edgewise.

I don’t know what the future holds But I know who holds the future.

Chapter 7

Why Learn Bible Verses?

It was easier to learn Bible verses in biblical times, before TV, hectic family schedules, Facebook, or smart phones. To learn Bible verses is to think thoughts from the mind of God. God has commanded us—not just once, but thousands of times—to know His Word by heart. *“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up”* (Deut. 6:6–7).

What I’m proposing here is not effortless. But I’ve found that the technique I am about to describe is much easier than any other way to learn Bible verses that I have tried. Here’s what I

do: I have discovered that by reading the same Scripture passages aloud just once a day, eventually I find that I have committed them to memory. By the way, to learn Bible verses is nothing like how your teachers made you memorize things when you were in school. There is a supernatural element to this. I'm serious. You gotta see this. Everyone's lifestyle is unique. I'm not suggesting that what I'm doing is the only way. All I'm saying is, here's what I'm doing, and it works. OK?

I have adopted a discipline of going to bed early so that I can rise early. I go to a place where I can talk to God out loud without disturbing others, and I read aloud several sets of Scripture passages. I read the same Scriptures every morning. One morning, as I was speaking the Word of God out loud, a thought came to me: (I'm certain it was a "nudge" from the Holy Spirit.) I knew I was speaking words that originated as thoughts in the mind of the infinite God in eternity past.

Now, here is the part I really want you to take hold of: Speaking God's words leads to thinking God's thoughts. By reading these same Scriptures just once each day, eventually I am able to recite them from memory. Thus I learn Bible verses without actually working at it. Anyone can do this. You're reading these words; therefore, you can learn Bible verses. Let me just ask you: can you remember your phone number, your address, the birthdays of people you know, details of how to do your job, and so on? If you can do those things, you can learn Bible verses.

Do not let the devil tell you that you can't learn Bible verses. God never asks you to do something without equipping you to do it. God's Word says you have a sound mind. "*God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*" (2 Timothy 1:7). He has given you a sound mind, and He says you can. The devil will work overtime to try to talk you out of it and convince you to the contrary. Here's where God's heart is: He wants us to know

His Word. If we would read and meditate on these words, He promises to reveal Himself to us. And that leads to what He really wants—the one thing we can give Him—an intimate relationship with Him.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). The Word was and *is* God. His Word is literally a part of who He is. When we internalize His Word, we allow God Himself to come into our minds. In the vernacular of the Bible, this is called the “manifest presence” of God. Here’s how Jesus gave that concept to us: *“Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him”* (John 14:21). The word *manifest* means to show or demonstrate plainly; to reveal.

What is Jesus saying? He’s promising that He will draw near to and reveal Himself in a personal way to whomever makes the commitment to know His Word. But He cannot draw near to you in this way until you choose by faith to obey Him. The moment you do, He witnesses to His Spirit in you, and bam! You know in your spirit, He’s right there. That’s His “manifest presence.”

We know that God is everywhere. He’s bigger than everything. Said another way, God “transcends” everything. That’s His “transcendent presence.” Indeed, He’s holding together every atom in the universe—including those of your body—moment-by-moment throughout time. But there’s no intimate personal relationship there.

In contrast to how I used to be, let me share a thought from the mind of God that reflects how I feel toward His thoughts now. (I truly believe that God had me in His mind when He moved David to write these words from Psalm 139.): *“How precious to me are Your thoughts, O God. How vast is the sum of them. Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. I awake and I am still with You”* (Ps. 139:17–18). And that’s how I begin every day. I don’t even

set an alarm clock. As I go to bed, I just ask God to wake me at the appointed time.

The next verse describes how my mornings begin. *“The Lord God has given me the tongue of a disciple and of one who is taught, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary. He wakens me morning by morning, He wakens my ear to hear as a disciple [as one who is taught]”* (Isa. 50:4 AMP). And so before breakfast, before my daily cardio workout, while it’s still dark outside and there are no worldly demands upon my time, I begin to feast on His Words: *“Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O Lord, God of hosts”* (Jer. 15:16). Dedicating the first portion of each day to God is a form of stewardship and tithing. Would you agree? God has graciously given me another day to live for Him. So I choose to give the first-fruits of the day to Him. It does, however, mean I have to go to bed earlier.

To summarize, here are the main points I hope I made: God has commanded us to memorize Bible verses, and thus know His Word by heart. Scripture memory is equivalent to thinking God’s thoughts. Reading passages just once each day is an easy way to memorize Bible verses. I also shared a few details of how I memorize Bible verses each day. I haven’t said a word yet about the benefits of memorizing Bible verses, but I’ve written plenty on that subject. The thing is, there are so many benefits, it’s impossible to list them all. So I picked a few that have been helpful to me, and written a separate article about each one.

Here’s a preview: Perfect peace; perfect! *“You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You because he trusts in You”* (Isa. 26:3). Given who God is, do you think His benefits will be trivial? Get ready to be amazed. I’m talking about practical, life-transforming benefits.

Chapter 8

Benefits of Scripture Memory

This is all about the benefits of Scripture memory. Let me tell you, God is no cheapskate when it comes to lavishing His benefits upon those who obey Him. Here's my Top Ten list of biblical principles that, if you live by these in obedience to God, you will benefit from:

- Truth that sets you free
- Freedom from demon-induced fear
- Joy in the Lord, which is constant and not dependent upon the ups and downs of

circumstance

- Perfect peace. Perfect. What can top that?
- Protection from the devil
- Contentment
- God's steadfast love and mercy
- God is with you in the midst of trials
- God works all things together for good
- God sings your praises to the angels in heaven.

There are hundreds more—perhaps thousands—that we can have. But these are verses that I have found to be some of the most practical and beneficial verses in the whole Bible, because they deal with some of the major areas of life that we struggle with. How I would love to have known these principles earlier in my life. Well, I didn't, but I know them now. And I long to share with you what God has poured into me. Get ready to be blessed.

The Truth Will Set You free

Jesus promises: if you spend regular time with Him in His Word, you will have His truth. Once you have the truth of His Word, you have freedom. *"If you remain in My Word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the Truth, and the Truth will set you free"* (John 8:31b–32). Jesus's

statement about “remaining in His Word” is a clear, unambiguous command to practice Scripture memory. Now, look at the list of promises:

You will be His disciple,

You will know the Truth,

The Truth will set you free.

Our part is the “Scripture memory” condition: *“If you remain in My Word.”*

If Eve had practiced Scripture memory back in the Garden of Eden, she would have known exactly what God said. She would have known the truth, and the devil wouldn’t have been able to persuade her. Perhaps we’d still be in Eden. From the earliest days of mankind, God has been telling us how to remain in His Word. For example: *“These Words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up”* (Deut. 6:6–7). Look at the list of “how-to” instructions God gave to the Israelites—and to us: We must pass on this handling of the Word of God—including Scripture memory—to our children. The Word of God should be the first thing we think about as we rise up from sleep. We must learn about and discuss God’s Word at home, grab opportunities to discuss and apply God’s Word during the day, and let His Word comfort our minds, our hearts, and our spirits as we lie down to sleep. Again, you can only do these things after you’ve done the Scripture memory part.

Back in the day when Jesus spoke those words, the people did not understand that He was not offering political freedom, but freedom from kinds of spiritually-induced miseries includes the scripture memory benefit: freedom from demon-induced fear.

2. A Spirit of Fear

The fear that you are experiencing is not from God; Satan is the author of your fear. *“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2 Tim. 1:7). Here is perhaps the most important thing to know about fear: it is not just a physiological response to circumstances. Fear is a spiritual phenomenon, inflicted by Satan and his legions of demons. God built a “flight-or-fight” mechanism into you for your protection. The rush of adrenaline known as a panic attack will also, in the face of real danger, give you an instant boost of strength. But Satan and his legions of demons, as they always do, have taken God’s gift and have corrupted it by using it against you. They do it by planting thoughts into your mind, thoughts of impending disaster and doom. They are behind all of those “what-if” questions that tie you in knots of fear. Paul wrote, *“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Eph. 6:12). The “voice” you “hear” in your thoughts sounds like your voice. But often, it isn’t. It may be the voice of a demon, impersonating you by “whispering” thoughts into your mind. In this way, demons are able to deceive you into believing their lies. When you walk with God, your life will begin to show the “fruit” of your relationship with Him: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law”* (Gal. 4:22–23). Another scripture memory benefit is joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice. Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, 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 minds through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:4–7)

You can live “above your circumstances” and rejoice, when your joy is in the Lord. This is not just “Bible-speak.” This truly happens. I know what you’re thinking: *Rejoice always? Be anxious for nothing? Not possible.* But God is longing to help you rise to this level of spiritual maturity. This is living in the joy that flows from a constant awareness of your intimate relationship with God. You’ll trust Him when you know for certain who you are in Christ.

Here’s a very practical application. This is learning to think the way God thinks. For example, you’ve noticed the price of gasoline increasing. And how do most people respond? By complaining, and worrying about their finances. But at the root of that worry is fear that God isn’t really going to provide for their needs. That line of thinking won’t take you anywhere good. So let me suggest a radically different response: choose to praise God instead. What? You expect me to praise God for high fuel prices? You’re crazy.

I’m not crazy; I’m just plugged into a wonderful principle. Here’s a verse that contains a principle I’ve chosen to live by: *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect”* (Rom. 12:2). Let me suggest that you take the high road. Try this the next time you go to the gas station. You won’t see people who are totally controlled by the “world system” doing this:

Praise Him because fuel is available.

Praise Him because you have a car.

Praise Him for the money in your account.

Praise Him because you are healthy enough to drive.

Praise Him because you have a license.

Praise Him because there are highways and bridges to drive on.

Praise Him because no matter what you choose to name, ultimately He provided it.

I want you to know that I actually do that every time I go to the gas station. It keeps my mind on God and off of the fact that I'm often paying more to fill the gas tank than I paid for my first car. I go around throughout the day praising God and thanking Him for what I have. When you go about praising God and recalling His Word, the devil can't get a word in edgewise. Here's how this works: just as the S-T-R-A-I-N of lifting heavy weights strengthens your muscles, God uses the strain of adversity to strengthen your faith in Him. His purpose is to make you more like Jesus. Thus, trials are merely occasions to turn to Him and *rejoice in the Lord*.

Joy is in the Lord—Happiness Is Tied to Circumstances

Happiness rises and plummets according to fickle circumstances. Joy in the Lord is abundant and constant. And you can choose to have it. Wouldn't you agree that you can deal with life's issues more effectively from a position of peace and joy in the Lord rather than from fear, worry, doubt, anxiety, and panic? Speaking of peace: what could possibly be better than this? The scripture memory benefit is having God keep you in perfect peace.

4. Thinking/Meditating on God Equals Perfect Peace.

Just look at this: when your thoughts line up with God's thoughts, when you have not just memorized His Word but internalized it into your heart, God gives you His peace. "*You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you because he trusts in you*" (Isa. 26:3). When you keep your mind firmly fixed on God, He gives you His perfect peace. What a great deal that is. This is not just "Bible-speak." This truly happens. Jesus said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled,*

neither let them be afraid” (John 4:27).

The world may give you peace according to your circumstances. But when you’ve surrendered your life to Jesus, He gives you “peace that surpasses all understanding.” But again, the offer is conditional. God offers perfect peace to those whose mind is stayed on [focused on or fixed on] Him. Therefore, I choose to keep my mind solidly on God by making God the top priority in my life. I’ll do it by preaching His Word to myself regularly throughout the day. It’s amazing how, once you’ve done enough Scripture memory, God will bring to your mind passages He wants you to apply in a particular situation.

I read it out loud because Romans 10:17 says, *“faith comes by hearing the Word of God.”* I choose to respond to life’s situations with praise to God at all times (Ps. 34:1) by trusting Him every time I hear a “what-if” from Satan. God does not deal in “what ifs” in my life. He knows what’s going to happen. I choose to believe that God is trustworthy, that He is good, and that He can handle whatever comes up. Trusting in myself has not given me peace. I don’t know what the future holds, but I do know who holds the future.

The scripture memory benefit here is that God gives me protection from the devil.

5. Obedience Equals Divine Protection

Someone has said that the Holy Spirit is the most under-employed being in the universe. How it must grieve the Spirit to watch us flailing around, frantically trying to gain control of our lives. We cannot do it. And one of our biggest obstacles is unseen: the devil. God has extended an offer of help to all who will submit to Him: *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). When you live a life of obedience (submission) to God, He pretty much takes care of your devil problems for you.

Jesus has given us the perfect “how-to” strategy for victory over the temptations, lies, and attacks

of the devil. In Matthew 4:1–11, Satan tried to tempt Jesus three times. But each time, Jesus deflected the temptation by speaking the truth of Scripture. In each response Jesus said, “It is written” followed by a statement of truth from the Word of God. For example: He answered, “*It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God’*” (Matt. 4:4). That’s how we must “submit ourselves therefore to God,” and in the process, resist the devil. The Word of God is our weapon against demonic beings who would otherwise easily devour us. The battle takes place in our minds, and we win the battle with Scripture. To put it another way: the more Scripture memory you’ve done, the more powerful is your weapon against the devil.

God reaffirmed this strategy when He inspired Paul to write: “*And take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God*” (Eph. 6:17). You have to put first things first—submit to God first. In this case, that’s Scripture memory. But don’t just take them in as “head knowledge.” Allow the Word of God to penetrate into the “soil of your heart.” That’s simply a discipline of saying the passages over and over, and as you say them, visualizing yourself as already living according to the principles contained in those passages. Then, as the Word takes root and begins to grow and bear fruit—and recall: one of the fruits of your relationship with the Holy Spirit is self-control—now you have the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ active in your life, and you can easily resist the devil. When it comes to obedience to God, there’s always a part I have to do first. Once I’ve done my part, God does the part I cannot possibly do. God wants our obedience. What He is watching for is steady progress in the right direction. He wants us to voluntarily come under His authority. In other words, He wants us to submit ourselves to God.

An Example from Scripture of Submitting to God: Tithing on Your Income

When you are a faithful steward of what God has given you, He shields you from the devil.

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear; says the Lord of hosts. (Mal. 3:10–11)

And let there be no doubt as to who the “devourer” is: *“Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”* (1 Pet. 5:8). This is a huge deal. The devil has incredible power over us, but God has him on a leash. When you walk in obedience to God by giving back to Him the first 10 percent of your income, He promises He will not allow the devil to destroy your finances. As we become more and more obedient—submitting to God—He strengthens the protective shield He has put around us.

Another scripture memory benefit is contentment, even in difficult times. *“for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me”* (Phil. 4:11b-13). We can know contentment even in lean times—Jesus Himself promises. Contentment is a virtue that does not come naturally, but it can be learned. If Paul could write about contentment from a prison cell, who of us cannot learn contentment in the affairs of our lives? But we must choose it, and then God promises to help us.

A reporter once asked John D. Rockefeller—one of the richest men in the world at the time—how much money was enough. He replied, “Just a little bit more.” But if that’s truly our goal, we

doom ourselves to failure. We can never succeed because we cannot possibly reach the goal.

Like a mirage shimmering on the horizon in the desert heat, the goal of “more” will always remain an illusion in front of us, always beyond our reach. It’s like a treadmill that wears us out, and takes us nowhere.

By embracing the priorities of the world system, the system controlled by Satan and his demons, we give others far too much power to control our lives. Only one opinion really matters: what does God think of our priorities? As true followers of Jesus, we must continually filter our priorities by asking ourselves, “Does this honor God? In light of eternity, does this really matter?” In the book of Hebrews, He says, *“Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’”* (Heb. 13:5). This is something you can do.

For most of us, it takes some adjustments in attitude and priorities. That was certainly true for me. But as you do more and more Scripture memory, you give the Holy Spirit more material to work with, and He begins the process of changing you from the inside out. When you become aware that this is happening in your life, do all you can to cooperate with Him. Here’s one more benefit for you: the scripture memory benefit that says God’s mercy is new every day.

7. Another Day Equals Another Chance

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘Therefore I will hope in him’” (Lam. 3:22–24). God’s love for you and for me is constant. Every day He gives us another chance to grow in obedience to Him. Therefore, I choose to put my full trust in Him. He has never let me down.

Aren’t you glad God isn’t like people? With most people, you’re lucky if you get a second

chance. How does that old saying go, “Fool me once; shame on you. Fool me twice; shame on me.” Some will hold a grudge for a long, l-o-n-g time. Not so with God. You may have messed things up royally today. But tomorrow, He’ll be right there for you, longing to forgive you, help you, calm you, strengthen you, encourage you, and pour out His steadfast love and mercy upon you. He really means it.

Don’t make the mistake of thinking of God as being like the people you know. People will hurt you, people will misunderstand you, and people will let you down. God will not. When God allows pain in your life, it’s always for a good reason. It’s to help you. And He will never let you down. The scripture memory benefit here is God is always with you.

8. He Longs for You to let Him Help You

*When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you. (Isa. 43:2)*

Late one night, when the devil attempted to engulf me in panic, I woke up enough to realize what was happening. In the darkness of our bedroom, I said softly, “God, I know you are here with me.” Then I spoke Isaiah 43:2 from memory. Instantly that spirit of fear left me. That true story more than proved to my satisfaction the benefit of Scripture memory. Once I experienced firsthand how demons flee from the spoken Word, the Word of God became my weapon of choice.

Isn’t it reassuring to know that God is always with us, even in difficult times? Throughout the

Bible, God promises He will never leave nor forsake us, that He will be with us always. Because we're not in heaven yet, our journey through life will be marked by a succession of problems and difficulties. That's what those references to "passing through the waters" and "walking through fire" refer to. And you'll notice, it doesn't say *if* troubles will come. It says *when* you pass through the waters and *when* you walk through fire." It'll be hard, but you'll make it through. That's a promise from God. That's also the power of God.

Because we have a free will, God will not force His help upon us. Satan and his demons are not so polite. They work at jamming our minds with thoughts, calculated to keep us distracted and keep our focus away from God. But knowledge is power. Because we know what Satan is doing, we also know to turn to God for help. The scripture memory benefit is: God works all things together for good.

9. God Will Make Something Good out of Your Problems

"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

Heavenly Father, I choose to trust You when You say my trials are just for a season. I know something good will come out of it. I choose to step out in faith as I wait for You.

Isn't it great that you can know truths about God's ways, including His promises to help you? (Some people actually believe we can't know any truth.) And isn't it fantastic to realize that He's working for your good to give you His very best? God never wastes an experience. He will take what seems to be an absolute "train wreck" of a life and use it for His purposes. He didn't cause your problems, but He allowed them to happen for reasons you may not know until you're in heaven. The fact is: He saw your train wreck coming before He created the universe.

God's plan is to strengthen you for His work. He'll take your mess and make it your message. He will teach you things through adversity that you would never learn unless He allowed some rain to fall into your life. These lessons are far more bearable when you know God has so much confidence in you that He allows them to happen. The "fire" of the adversity you are in may be hot, but God's hand is on the thermostat. He knows exactly how much you can stand. Job put it so nicely: *"But He knows the way that I take; when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold"* (Job 23:10). This is the process God uses to make us more like Christ, so we can do Christ's work. The scripture memory benefit is: God rejoices over you with singing.

10. God Isn't Mad at You; He's Mad about You

"The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zeph. 3:17).

Dear Father in heaven, for much of my life I didn't know how much You loved me, or that You even cared about me at all. I am overjoyed to learn just how much You really do love me. Your Word has truly opened my eyes. Thank you.

Some people keep God at a distance, picturing Him as an angry old man with a big stick who is just waiting for them to so much as look sideways so He can pound them down. That image of God is a lie from the demons in hell.

Here's the truth: God loves you. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life"* (John 3:16) I once heard a sermon where the speaker told us to draw a circle around the word *world* in John 3:16 in our Bibles. Then he had us write the word *me* beside the circle. The idea was to get each of us to read

it and start thinking of it like this: “For God so loved *me* that he gave His only son.” The person said, “Even if you were the only person in the world, Jesus would have died on the cross for *you*. Because we are finite beings in a finite universe, it’s impossible for us to fully comprehend the concept of an infinite God. If you divide infinity into two parts (or two zillion parts), each of the parts is infinite. Each one of us has available to us one hundred percent of the infinite God who created the universe. I cannot truly understand how that works, but I believe it. I don’t know about you, but I find it reassuring to realize that I cannot understand God. I mean, think how small a God He would be if any of us could understand Him. You may ask, “How can I get to know God?” We get to know God in the same way we get to know each other. We know other people by the words that they say and the works that they do.

It’s the same with God. We know Him by the words that He said and the works that He did. And we get both of those from reading His Word, the Bible. You can’t read it just once. Your mind needs constant renewing. If someone were suffering from, for example, pain in their lower back (as I have in the past), that person could very likely reduce or eliminate that pain by practicing a discipline of regular stretching and exercise. But you cannot just do the exercises one time and expect any lasting benefit. It’s the same with Scripture memory. This has to become a habit, a part of your daily life. And like exercising, if you do it, you reap the benefits.

Summary: The entire Bible was written for our benefit. Just think of all the devotional books that have been written and all the sermons preached, every one of them applying biblical wisdom for our benefit. There must be thousands, perhaps millions of individual applications. It makes me wonder: is it possible that, like God Himself, the number of practical applications of biblical wisdom that could be written about Him is infinite? There is an old saying: “What you don’t know won’t hurt you.” Is that true? There may be examples someone might relate to support that.

But the converse could also be argued. What if you took hold of a bare electric wire, but you didn't know that it was connected to a live circuit: Trust me: you would instantly know that it hurts you.

When it comes to Scripture memory and knowing and applying the Word of God, I like this variation of that old saying: What you don't know can never help you. Wouldn't you agree, if you've got all those benefits from God in your life, you are equipped and protected to handle whatever the world throws at you, right? The really awesome thing is, anyone can have this.

Chapter 9

Memorizing Scripture Takes Perseverance.

Memorizing Scripture begins with discipline. It's not hard, but it's every day.

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37).

Three Stages of Scripture Learning:

As you get into the habit of memorizing Scripture, here's what will happen:

Stage 1—Discipline

At first it takes a determined effort to do these things. Call it a step of faith. You have to believe—though you can't see the result yet. Here's where most people quit. Don't be one of them. Instead, reorder your priorities. Put God first. Start with just a few minutes each day. Do that for a week, then increase it little by little. As you continue diligently, you'll soon arrive at the next stage:

Stage 2—Desire

At this point, you'll find that you are eagerly anticipating the time you spend in the Word each

day. It becomes something you get to do, not a duty you feel you have to do. Press on for another three or four weeks to the final stage:

Stage 3—Delight

From this point on, your appetite for the Word of God will be insatiable. You'll know when you're there. It'll be like drinking salt water. The more you drink, the thirstier you become. You cannot get enough. You will never look back; it will be difficult to comprehend how you ever lived without the Word of God at the center of your life.

Example of what not to do: Don't be like my late friend John. He bought a membership at a health club because he needed exercise. He paid the money, then walked out the door saying to himself, "Problem solved." But he never went back to work out. Don't let your Scripture memory be like that. Instead, make a decision to spend time in the Bible every day. And then do it every day, seven days a week, even if you have to start with just ten minutes a day.

Again from the Gospel of Matthew: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind*" (Matthew 22:37) I ask you: how can a person say they love the Lord with all their heart—but they won't spend any time putting His Words into their mind and into their heart? How can a person love the God they do not know? Answer: they cannot. Suppose you purchased a gym membership like the man I described previously. But instead of wasting the money as he did, you actually went to the gym regularly and did your workouts. After your first few workouts, would you say to yourself, "I don't see any difference. This isn't working."

Would you say that? Of course not. You wouldn't expect to be able to see big changes right away. But you know that if you did those exercises regularly, by the same time next year you

would see and feel an amazing difference. In doing weight-bearing exercises, you wouldn't start with the heaviest weights either. You'd start with weights you could lift—with some difficulty—and work out with those. When it got easy to lift those weights, you'd go to heavier weights. Scripture memory works very much like that. However, the benefits of putting God's Word into your mind and into your heart are eternal, not just for a few short years. Don't be like this, either. I was giving a Bible presentation to a church men's group. (This was in a church that emphasizes rites and rituals over the Word of God.) I was attempting to show them from Scripture itself how important it is to God that we should all learn to handle His Word. Now this was a small informal group. But right in the middle of my talk, one of the men actually blurted out, "Oh, this Bible reading is just one more thing that the church is trying to pile onto a plate that is already full." First of all: if their "plate is already full," they need to seriously review their priorities. God ought to be first in our lives, not last, or in their case, missing entirely. But how tragic, that they saw no real value in knowing God's Word. But then again, why would they? The church they are in teaches against the application of Scripture as I'm doing here. According to them, Scripture is not to be taken literally. In fact, before the mid-1940s, that church declared that it was a mortal sin—you would burn in hell—if you even had a Bible in your home. If I were the devil, that is *exactly* how I would manipulate the thinking of the people.

Anyway, the attitude of those men was an example of unbelief. But not just unbelief; it was deliberate, hardened unbelief. And it turned out that most of them—perhaps all of them—agreed. Apparently, they just wanted their coffee and doughnuts and to hear something that would make them feel comfortable. They didn't want education; they wanted corroboration. They didn't want to hear that they were supposed to actually be doing something.

One pastor whose sermons I listen to regularly has referred to this as "an easy-chair faith in an

easy-chair church.” That is so dangerous. Paul tells us how God responded to the Jews who refused to accept His Word and His Son: *“What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, ‘God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day’”* (Rom. 11:7–8) As I’ve said before, Satan gets permission from God to afflict us based upon our actions or inactions. God is saying in effect, “Since you want to be indifferent to My ways, I will allow a spirit of stupor to help you to have what you want.” Paul describes it as having God’s Word “veiled” before their eyes. And so, their capacity to understand and benefit from the Bible diminishes—eventually to nothing.

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:3–4). Here is Satan at work again, having obtained permission to—as I like to say it—“anesthetize” those who just don’t seem to get it—and by continuing in this mode, they are declaring that they don’t want to get it. It’s so important to understand what’s going on here. The following passage is from Hebrews, chapter 8:

For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

The New Covenant

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

(Hebrews 8:7–12)

Notice where he says: *"For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord."* Isn't God putting us on notice? If we don't continue in His new covenant, He will show no concern for us either. I don't know about you, but I don't want to be on the wrong side of that divide. Then the writer goes on to describe the new covenant: *"I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, they shall all know me"* As I mentioned previously, I used to be in an "easy-chair faith in an easy-chair church." It asked nothing of me. There was no discipleship; no sharing of helpful biblical principles. There was just a secular lifestyle with—in the words of another pastor—a 'religious glaze' painted over it." Don't be like that. Invite God into your mind and into your heart.

Get into God's Word so that God can get His Word into you. *"Truly, truly, I say to you if anyone keeps my Word he will never see death"* (John 8:51). You can't give what you don't have. If you aren't becoming strong in the Word, you will never be able to use it to help someone else.

Chapter 10

A Spirit of Fear

Your fear is being caused by the devil; by a spirit of fear. *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”* (2 Tim. 1:7). Here is perhaps the most important thing to know about fear: it is not just a physiological response to circumstances. God has given you a “flight-or-fight” mechanism for your protection. The rush of adrenaline known as a “panic attack” will also, when you’re facing real danger, give you an instant boost of strength. But Satan and his legions of demons have corrupted God’s gift by using it against you. They do it by planting thoughts into your mind, thoughts of impending disaster and doom. They are behind all of those “what if” questions that tie you in knots of fear.

Paul wrote: *“Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”* (Eph. 6:12). The “voice” you “hear” in your thoughts sounds like your voice. But often, it isn’t. It may be the voice of a demon, impersonating you by somehow injecting thoughts into your mind. In this way, demons are able to deceive you into believing their lies. Remember: deception is Satan’s most powerful weapon against the entire human race. But also remember: God has your back.

The fear that you are experiencing is not from God. How often did Jesus say things, such as, “Do not be afraid,” “let not your hearts be troubled,” “fear not,” and “be of good cheer”? No, most of your fear is being inflicted by a spirit of fear. God has given you the power to overcome. He has put His power into His Word. But that concept is: *“foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the Power of God”* (1 Cor. 1:18).

God’s heart burns with love for you. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son”* (John 3:16), and He longs for you to love Him in return. Also, His Word commands us to love others even more than we love ourselves. God has blessed most of us with a sound mind. We have the capacity to know; to memorize; to reason. We also have the freedom to choose what we

put into our minds. He urges us to “*be transformed by the renewing of our minds*” (Rom. 12:2) Memorize this: “*God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind*” (2 Tim. 1:7).

You can do it. Just write it on a recipe card and read it over several times a day until you can say it by heart. Then, and this is very important, recite it silently to yourself throughout the day. You will be astonished at how it helps you.

“Heavenly Father, I praise You for showing me this truth about Satan and his demons. Now that I know that they are the instigators of the fear I’ve had I know exactly what to do. The next time fear even thinks about tormenting me, I won’t listen to those lies. I’ll quickly turn to You and rely on Your promises for help and comfort.”

The good news is: God will do the same for you.

Chapter 11

Perfect Was Not Good Enough

Perfect was not good enough? How was that possible? For if heaven, where everything is perfect, had something or someone that was imperfect, how could this “imperfect” thing be allowed? All of this began many, many years ago, perhaps millions of years ago, before the universe existed. The angelic realm was a place where everything was perfect. This message is important because it explains everything.

Every problem you have ever had in the past, every problem you have right now, every problem you will ever have in the future, all these problems are the direct result of events that happened

in eternity past. And wouldn't you agree that when you know and understand the source of your problems, you have taken a big step toward managing and even eliminating those problems? So let me show you what very few churches teach to their congregations but that everyone needs to know. My goal is to answer these questions:

Why are there evil beings?

Where did they come from?

So what? What does that have to do with me? Let's start at the beginning: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1a). In eternity past, God performed His first creation event. He created the "heavenly realm." Then, God created all the angels. That verse also refers to the beginning of the natural realm where space and time and all of the galaxies in the universe came into existence. Thanks to various writers of the Bible, in this case, the prophet Ezekiel, we can know at least some of the details about the invisible heavenly realm and about the angels. So I invite you to focus the lens of your "mind's eye" on an evil human king, identified in Scripture as the king of Tyre.

It's important to know that wherever there is an evil human being, there is always an evil spirit in the invisible realm controlling and empowering the evil human person. The lamentation for the king of Tyre begins: *"Moreover the word of the Lord came to me, saying, 'Son of man, take up a lamentation for the king of Tyre, and say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God'"* (Ezek. 28:11–12a). But immediately, the focus jumps beyond the human king, and Ezekiel gives us a description of a being that cannot possibly be a human being. Indeed, we are looking at Lucifer himself. This supernatural creature, described in the next passage, is manipulating the wicked human king with the skill of a master puppeteer. Here's the description:

You were the seal of perfection, Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden,

the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created. . . . You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. (Ezek. 28:12b–14)

All of the angels were perfect beings. “*You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created*” (Ezek. 28:15a). The most magnificent angel was named “Lucifer,” which means “Shining One.” Someone has expressed it more colloquially: “God don’t make no junk.” “*You were in Eden, the garden of God*” (Ezek. 28:13a) Consider perfect beings in a perfect environment, enjoying intimate fellowship with God Himself. How could anything possibly go wrong?

Evil Appears in Heaven

Were it not for one little five-letter word, the whole universe and all of humanity might never have been created. You see it there—*until*. “*You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, until iniquity was found in you*” (Ezek. 28:15). You have to understand: As we know, all human beings are created with “volition,” a free will. Likewise, Lucifer and all of the angles were given the freedom to choose. And we’re told that Lucifer’s “marketing effort” (referred to in Ezek. 28:16 as “the abundance of your trading”) was so persuasive that one-third of the angels (see Rev. 12:3–4a) chose to join him in rebellion against God.

Ezekiel 28:16–17 tells us:

By the abundance of your trading You became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, That they might gaze at you. You defiled your sanctuaries By the multitude of your iniquities, By the iniquity of your trading. (Ezek. 28:16–17)

If the enticing lies of Lucifer were so persuasive that he caused one-third of all the angels to believe that they would be better off following him than following God, we human beings do not stand a chance against him on our own. But God has given us the power of His Word as our weapon against the demonic forces of evil. *“And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth”* (Rev. 12:3–4a) The reference to “stars of heaven” in the quote from Revelation refers to angels. Likewise, the phrase “morning stars” in the quote from Job also refers to angels. The book of Job also identifies angels: *“when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy”* (Job 38:7). Here, then, is the result of Lucifer’s focus on himself: Lucifer made a fatal strategic error. This is what pride can do.

Lucifer was so magnificent in his appearance and strength that pride began to well up in his heart. He decided he would not serve God any longer. He actually believed he could do better on his own than always having to follow God’s agenda. So enticing was his offer to his fellow angels that one third of them chose to join him in rebellion.

You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes Was prepared for you on the day you were created. “You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones.
(Ezek. 28:13–14)

Lucifer’s heart was so blinded by how magnificent he was (think: “mirror, mirror on the wall”) that he actually overlooked the fact that he was a created being. He forgot that he was totally dependent upon God to sustain his very existence. Here’s a look into Lucifer’s heart as he exercises his free will. *“You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High’”* (Isa. 14:13–14).

Notice the “I will” statements:

I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God.

I will set my throne on high.

I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the north.

I will ascend above the heights of the clouds.

I will make myself like the Most High.

Lucifer was not thinking about how to carry out God’s will. Lucifer was planning his own agenda. He was choosing—by his own free will—to execute his own plan. Why would he do

that? After all, look at what he had: He was a perfectly-created being, living in a place of perfection. He was the most beautiful; the most magnificent angel of all. He walked in direct fellowship with God and had authority over all the other angels. But there were two things God had that Lucifer did not have, and Lucifer wanted them. Lucifer wanted independence. Lucifer wanted freedom to plan his own agenda instead of always doing God's will. Lucifer also wanted glory—to be worshiped.

Remember how Satan tried to tempt Jesus in the wilderness? Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, *“All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me”* (Matt. 4:8–9). But God does not share His glory with anyone. *“I am the Lord; that is my name; my glory I give to no other; nor my praise to carved idols”* (Isa. 42:8). Of course, God saw all of this coming, and had a plan ready to execute. God could have simply destroyed Lucifer and his demon followers, but He chose a different path. He chose to use Lucifer's rebellion to bring more glory to Himself than He would have had if there had been no rebellion.

What Lucifer got: Lucifer's identity was changed. His name became Satan that means “accuser.” Satan and his followers were judged, sentenced, and cast out of the angelic heavenly realm. They were banished to a dark, watery place in the natural realm called “Earth.” God's plan was to demonstrate to Lucifer and the angels that He was so in control that He could create lesser beings (humans) who, if they would obey God, would go further than more powerful angelic beings who would not obey Him. The results were glory for God and humiliation for Satan. In essence, God wanted to embarrass Satan and rub his face in the mud. And so, Satan and his legions of demons remained in this formless, dumpy place. They were filled with rage over having been denied a kingdom in the heavenly realm. They considered God's verdict very unfair and boiled

with hatred toward God.

But then a moment came when God stepped out of the eternal realm, stood on this dark, watery, formless planet Earth, and spoke: *“Let there be light”* (Gen. 1:3a). Can you imagine what a rude awakening that moment must have been for Satan and his demons? But it was about to get even worse. Satan watched as God created the Garden of Eden on Earth. He saw God populate Eden with all manner of plants and animals. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed (Gen. 2:8). But then, much to Satan’s bewilderment, he watched from the shadows as God created the first humans: Adam and Eve. Then God said, *“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”* So God created man in His own image; *in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”* (Gen. 1:26–27). At that point, this Garden of Eden, including all that was in it, was a place of total perfection. Here’s what must have really, as it were, poured gasoline on the fire of Satan’s hatred toward God: in Satan’s hearing, God gave dominion of this totally refurbished Earth over to Adam and Eve. And God blessed them. And God said to them, *“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* And God said, *“See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food. Also, to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, in which there is life, I have given every green herb for food”* and it was so (Gen. 1:28–30).

Imagine Satan’s rage. Not only was Satan denied a share of God’s glory; not only was he

stripped of his beauty; not only was he banished from the angelic realm; now he heard God give these puny human beings domination over the one place that Satan thought was his alone.

Suddenly Satan got an idea. Remember that scene in the TV Christmas movie, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* where the Grinch comes up with a devious, diabolical plan to eliminate Christmas?

[[insert 02.jpg]] [Caption:] The Grinch got a wonderful, awful idea. Satan's "wonderful, awful idea"

Recall after Adam and Eve fell for Satan's deception about the forbidden fruit, Satan also heard God say that the seed (offspring) of the woman would crush Satan's head, and he (Satan) would bruise her heel.

So the Lord God said to the serpent: "*Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, And more than every beast of the field; On your belly you shall go, And you shall eat dust All the days of your life. And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel*" (Gen. 3:14–15).

The Amplified Bible helps to understand the words that the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to write.

One of the features I like about the Amplified Bible is that it puts a bit of "commentary" (explanation) directly into the inspired Word of the Bible: "*And I will put enmity (open hostility) Between you and the woman, And between your seed (offspring) and her Seed; He shall [fatally] bruise your head, And you shall [only] bruise His heel*" (Gen. 3:15 AMP). I'm sure you would agree that to "[fatally] bruise" is much different than simply a bump on the head.

Jesus, when he began his ministry, was about thirty years of age, being the son (as was supposed) of:

Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of

Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Sala, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor, the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Eber, the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech, the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan, the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

(Luke 3:23-38)

Satan must have thought, “That is *so not* going to happen. I’ll just kill off the seed, and I win. Game over.” When the opportunity came, Satan caused the “bad seed,” Cain, to kill off the “good seed,” Abel. He probably thought, “That was easy.” But Satan didn’t know that Eve would eventually give birth to another son, Seth: “*And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, “God has appointed for me another offspring instead of Abel, for Cain killed him”* (Gen. 4:25).

Satan realized the scope of his “containment” operation would have to be expanded. He figured

out that the “seed” God referred to would be coming in a future generation. But which generation? So Satan watched as human history unfolded. When he believed that a particular “seed” might be the one God was referring to, he would take action to stop it. Another of Satan’s attempts to thwart God’s plan: Satan sent wicked demons to possess the bodies of men. These demon-controlled men had relations with the women of the land, producing a whole race of giants. But God wiped them all out with a global flood, except for one righteous man named Noah, along with his family. In the following Scripture passage, the term “sons of God” refers to the fallen angels that chose to rebel against God. From Genesis, chapter 6:

“When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” (Gen. 6:1–8)

Satan caused King Herod to kill all of the male children under two years of age. But God sent an angel to warn Mary and Joseph to take Jesus to Egypt. From the Gospel of Matthew: *“Now after*

Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem” (Matt. 2:1).

“When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way. Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from the wise men.” (Matt. 2:16)

Satan really thought he had the situation contained when he got Judas to betray Jesus, then got the religious leaders to persuade the Roman officials to crucify Jesus. Just look at the “lynch-mob” scene portrayed in these verses: And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him (Matt. 27:31).

“And they cried out again, “Crucify him.” And Pilate said to them, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Crucify him.” And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him. . . . But they kept shouting, “Crucify, crucify him.” (Mark 15:13–14, 20; Luke 23:21)

When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, “crucify him, crucify him.” Pilate

said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no guilt in him." . . . They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him." Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:10, 15)

Clearly, Satan did not know that he was playing right into God's plan for salvation.

Satan and his legions of demons must have really celebrated with glee during the events of that fateful Friday. But as we know, Jesus had what we would call the "last laugh" when He rose from the dead on that first Easter Sunday. Do you see how, at every turn, God was way ahead of Satan? God was allowing Satan to dig his own pit deeper and deeper because it is impossible to outmaneuver God. But Satan, being totally blinded by rage and hatred, never learned that lesson. Unlike human men and women, God made no provision for Satan and his followers to repent. They are on a one-way street, leading them to "the lake of fire." There they will burn in torment for all of eternity. The only satisfaction they will ever have will be to take as many human souls as possible away from God into the lake of fire with them. All of that is well supported by God's Word.

Referring to the fallen angels, God says in the book of Hebrews: *"For surely it is not angels that he helps, but he helps the offspring of Abraham"* (Heb. 2:16). And referring to the souls of unrighteous people, He says:

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink. I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me." Then they also will answer, saying, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or

a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?” Then he will answer them, saying, “Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me. And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matt. 25:41–46)

The courtroom drama described below goes on continuously, day and night. It’s going on right now (Rev. 12:10). Unlike humans, Satan and his demons need no sleep. Unlike humans, Satan and his demons are unified; they are highly organized. In contrast, we humans, including Christians, are disorganized, and we fight among ourselves. So what? What does that have to do with me? Plenty. The devil’s goal is to take control of your mind. Here are a few of the main ways he does that:

Torment: He may inflict so much misery on you that it drives you out of your mind. Then, Satan or a gang of his demons will move in and take control of your way of thinking.

Quarreling: The enemy “divides and conquers” when he gets us to fight among ourselves. But we can learn to recognize those demonic provocations and react by blessing and not cursing.

Prosperity: Satan might afflict you with prosperity, causing you to lean back and lower your guard, making it easy for him to set up a stronghold from which to control you. We can see that so clearly in the lives of a lot of world leaders.

False religion: If you must go to church, Satan wants you to remain under the “anesthesia” of one of the “easy-chair” religions, where virtually no biblical truth is taught.

Double-mindedness: Satan arranges a myriad of details so that he can raise up a “mental

partition” to keep you from applying God’s truth into your life.

Idolatry: Any thing or any activity that is more important to you than God is an idol. It’s not wrong to have “stuff”; the problem is when “stuff” has you.

Temptation: Satan’s desire is to get us to transgress God’s laws. When we do that, we give the devil a legal right in the Court of Heaven to inflict his wickedness upon us.

Unwanted thoughts: You can’t block thoughts put into your mind by the devil by “trying harder.” But God has put His power into His Word as our weapon against those thoughts.

Ignorance: You can be forgiven for not knowing, or for not knowing that you don’t know. But when you refuse to know, you serve Satan and not God.

Impatience: The concept of *waiting* pervades the whole Bible. When our attitude is, “I want it, and I want it now,” we’re serving Satan, not God.

Satan’s goal for your life is that he wants you to forget about all of this “stupid church stuff” and to ignore everything you’ve just read here. He wants you to live according to the common sense “wisdom” of the world, most of which he authored and is vigorously promoting because then he has you. But it doesn’t have to be that way.

Chapter 12

Divine Protection from the Devil

God offers His protection from the devil to all who will submit to Him. “*Submit yourselves to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). How it must grieve the Holy Spirit, to watch us flailing around, frantically trying to gain control of our lives. We cannot do it. And one of our biggest obstacles is unseen: the devil. There are three guiding principles:

1. When a believer speaks God's Word, it's Jesus Himself speaking.
2. The Word of God contains the power of God.
3. Obedience: Our part is to submit to God's authority.

This teaches the biblical principle that when a believer speaks God's Word, it's Jesus Himself speaking, and the key supporting verse is "*He who hears you hears Me, and he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent me*" (Luke 10:16a). The phrase, "He who hears you hears Me," declares that when Jesus's followers speak His Word, it's really Him speaking through them. The Word of God contains the power of God. Here are verses supporting the assertion that there is power in God's Word: "*For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*" (1 Cor. 1:18). The Word of God seems foolish to many. In reality, it contains the power of God.

God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

(2 Tim. 1:7)

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.(Eph. 3:20–21 NKJV)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. (Rom. 1:16)

Biblical Principle: Obedience

Our part is to submit to God's authority. "*Submit yourselves to God; resist the devil and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7). What He is really watching for is steady progress in the right

direction. He wants us to voluntarily come under His authority. In other words, He wants us to submit ourselves to God. Jesus has given us the perfect “how-to” strategy for gaining victory over the temptations, lies, and attacks of the devil. In Matthew 4:1–11, Satan tried to tempt Jesus three times. But Jesus deflected each temptation by speaking the truth of Scripture. In each response, Jesus said, “It is written” followed by a statement of truth from the Word of God.

Example:

The temptation of Jesus:

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written,

“‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

“‘He will command his angels concerning you,’

and

“‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan. For it is written,

*“You shall worship the Lord your God
and him only shall you serve.”*

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

(Matt. 4:1–11)

That’s how we must “submit ourselves therefore to God” and in the process “resist the devil.” The Word of God is our weapon against demonic beings who would otherwise easily devour us. The battle takes place in our minds, and we win the battle with Scripture. To put it another way: the more Scripture memory you’ve done, the more powerful is your weapon against the devil. God reaffirmed this strategy when He inspired Paul to write: *“And take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”* (Eph. 6:17). You have to put first things first.

Submit to God. In this case, that’s Scripture memory. But don’t just take them in as “head knowledge.” Allow the Word of God to penetrate into the “soil of your heart.” That’s simply a discipline of saying the passages over and over, and as you say them, visualizing yourself as already living according to the principles contained in those passages. Then, as the Word takes root and begins to grow and “bear fruit,” remember: one of the Fruits of your relationship with the Holy Spirit is self-control, now you have the power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ active in your life, and you can easily resist the devil.

A personal anecdote: This illustrates the difference between doing something in my own strength versus in the power of the Holy Spirit working through me. As one of my sons and I were stopping for a red light in the left-turn lane of a busy street, the engine in my minivan suddenly quit and refused to start. Although the street was *nearly* level, we had to really strain to push the van around the corner and into an area where it was out of the way. That effort left us exhausted. I thought of that a year or so later, when I again found myself waiting at a red light in another

left-turn lane. This lane had a substantial incline. Nevertheless, when the green arrow came on, with just the slightest pressure of my foot upon the gas pedal, the same minivan moved easily up the incline, around the corner, and quickly accelerated to highway speed. It's a lot like that with spiritual matters. Just as it was all my son and I could do to move the heavy vehicle just a few feet under our own strength—without power from the engine—you and I are nearly powerless in the spiritual battles we face, without the power of the Holy Spirit to help us. There is almost always a part that we have to do first. In the last half of my anecdote, my part was to press my foot against the gas pedal. Once I did that, the power of gasoline being burned in the cylinders of the car's engine caused the car to move forward without me having to do anything else. In the same way, when it comes to areas of obedience to God, there's always a part I have to do first. Once I've done my part, God does the part I cannot possibly do.

Submitting to God: Tithing

Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of Heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the Lord of hosts. (Mal. 3:10–11)

And let us have no doubt as to who the “devourer” is: “*Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*” (1 Pet. 5:8). Getting God's protection from the devil is a huge deal. The devil has incredible power over us, but God has him on a leash. When you walk in obedience to God, He promises He will not allow the devil to destroy your finances. The key to all of this is submission to God. That's why the

submission part of the verse comes first. It's like: Step 1: submit to God in all your ways, Step 2: Now that you've done that, you have the power to resist the devil.

We don't have to be perfect. God is well aware that we cannot be perfect. He just wants to see us making steady progress in the right direction. If you do slide back a bit, don't let the devil tell you that you are a loser, and that you might as well give up. No, just like learning to play the piano, submitting to God takes determination and daily practice. God is patient. He's on your side. He so wants you to succeed. He created you. He loves you. The Father sent His only Son to die on a cross to pay for your sins. He hasn't given up on you, so don't you give up on yourself.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, God's Word reminds you that you are not your own and have been bought with a price. (A very high price.) Do this: Memorize this verse: "*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.*" (James 1:7) You can do it. Just write it on a recipe card and read it over several times a day until you can say it by heart. Then—very important—recite it silently to yourself frequently throughout the day. You will be astonished at how it helps you. One more thing: if the devil tries to guilt you by reminding you of your past, just remind him of his future: "*Depart from Me you cursed, into the everlasting fire*" (Matt. 25:41).

Chapter 13

The Night I Stood up to the Devil

Have you ever stood up to the devil? I did, and I made him back off! On this particular night, when the devil set out to terrify me, as he had many times in the past, this time, I terrified him. And—good news—you can do the same thing. "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*" (Hos. 4:6). I originally wrote this on Monday, November 14, 2011. On that same Monday in

1988, exactly twenty-three years earlier, I was fired from the job I had held for over sixteen years. What I am about to relate is a real-life example of how knowing and applying passages from the Word of God allowed me to live in peace, just as God meant for us to live.

Early in the morning of December 12, 2001, I had an experience that I can only describe as a message or a calling from God. If this ever happens to you, you'll understand what I'm talking about. I just knew it was God, and it seemed He wanted me to write. I felt called to be a Christian writer. In the fall of 2003, our son Jeff was in his final year of art college. In the tradition of starving artists everywhere, he couldn't afford to hire a model. Instead, he asked me to pose for him. I agreed, and asked if I could pose holding my Bible. As we set up the scene, I chose to open my Bible to Isaiah 43. My initial plan was to spend the posing time segments, when I had to sit perfectly still, memorizing Scripture. The bottom of the right-hand page contained this passage:

But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. (Isa. 43:1–3).

I had been taught that phrases, such as “pass through the waters” and “walk through fire,” were poetic references to suffering. God doesn't promise a trouble-free life. Sometimes we get soaked; sometimes we get singed. What's important is knowing that God is with us through it all. My initial intention was to learn new verses each time. Yet, session after session, I found myself wanting to see—indeed, needing to see—those reassuring promises from Isaiah: “*When you pass*

through the waters, I will be with you . . . when you walk through fire you shall not be burned.”

Little did I know just how important those promises would be.

Here is the most important part of this story. Read this carefully, and you’ll see how, the moment

I opened my mouth and began to speak His Word, God acted swiftly to banish the devil for me.

Now I know, He had been right there, waiting for me to speak His Word, and repeating Scripture,

I would be calling upon Him for help. In the early hours of a warm summer night, I found myself

half-awake. Suddenly, as though being rushed by a wicked intruder, I felt that all-too-familiar

wave of panic beginning to rise within me. Ah, but this time I knew what to do. I knew the

source of the fear, and I was equipped with the truth of God’s Word.

Not wishing to wake Joanne, I rose to my feet and said softly, “Lord, I know you are right here

with me.” Then I began to recite God’s Words: *‘When you pass through the waters I will be with*

you when you walk through fire you will not be burned” (Isa. 43:2). As I spoke those Words

softly into the darkness of the bedroom, the rush of fear and panic subsided instantly. In a

moment it was over. The feeling of impending doom was gone. Do you know why? Because to

do battle with Satan and his demons is to do battle with bullies, and that’s how bullies respond.

When confronted with greater strength (in this case, the power of God by way of His spoken

Word), they run!

A week or two later, the devil took another run at me, this time as I slept. I dreamed I was lying

awake in bed, in the midst of a full-blown panic attack. In my dream, the bed was shaking so

hard it woke Joanne. She asked what was happening and why the bed was shaking. I told her

Satan was trying to overwhelm me with panic. Then—still in the dream—I said to Joanne (with

just a bit of a smile) “Watch this!” Once again I quoted—this is all still part of the dream—God’s

promise from Isaiah 43: *“When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, When you walk*

through fire” (Isa. 43:2).

Suddenly I was awake... The dreaded feeling was totally gone. I nearly burst out laughing in the middle of the night as I realized how God had just come through for me again. The next morning, I related my dream to Joanne. “You have,” she observed, “hard-wired yourself so effectively that Satan can’t even get to you in your sleep.” Joanne’s comment that I “hard-wired” myself is one of the most important statements in this whole article. This is why I like to encourage people to do Scripture memory. That’s how you get victory over demons. Look at these Words regarding Satan from the lips of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: *“There is no truth in him for he is a liar and the father of lies”* (John 8:44)

To deal with Satan is to deal with lies. When the lie Satan places in your mind says—as it did in my case—“You’re all alone in this, and you’re going to lose everything,” don’t panic. Instead, rest in the comfort of God’s promises: “I will be with you even in this time of trouble. As you persevere and put your trust in Me I will bring you through it. In the process, your faith will grow stronger.” That’s not a quote, but it’s a paraphrase of what God will do for us, when we release our problems to Him. Now, I’ve read the Barna polls, and I know that about two-thirds of Americans do not believe that Satan and his demons are real. This, despite the fact that there are 250 references to demons, by various names, in the New Testament.

But to deny the existence of demons is to call Jesus a liar. Stated simply: If you deny the existence of Satan or his ability to attack you, he has you! You’re playing right into his hands. But it doesn’t have to be that way. Jesus also said: *“If you remain in my Word, you are truly my disciples and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (John 8:31b–32). Peace and freedom are yours when you know God’s Word. When you keep your mind firmly fixed on God, he gives you His perfect peace. What a great deal that is. This is not just “Bible-speak.” This

really happens. *“You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You”* (Isa. 26:3).

What was I doing when I quoted the Bible and banished the devil? I was keeping my mind on God, not on my problems. I was preaching the Gospel to myself. Remember that old saying: “What you don’t know won’t hurt you”? That’s a lie! (Satan probably started that.) The truth is: “What you don’t know can never help you.” In my case, once I did the work of knowing, and began acting upon that knowledge, God did the part I could not possibly do.

God meant for us to use His Book. He loaded it with word pictures showing how He relates to us and how to live in harmony with Him. It’s packed with truths and principles that He gave us. Those truths are our weapons against an adversary who knows we are defenseless without them. “Submit yourselves therefore to God” The transformation process I’ve just described was not instantaneous. Like forming any new habit, it took time for God to burn His truths into the creases of my brain. All I can honestly tell you is that I’ve lived by the principles of God’s Word for years. And, despite current circumstances that would drive many to panic, I live in complete freedom from fear. I don’t know what my future holds, but I know who holds my future.

Chapter 14

Divide And Conquer: Four Schemes Satan Uses

When a red warning light appears on the dashboard of your car, do you respond by smashing the light with a hammer? Probably not. Why? Because you recognize that the red light is a warning that something is wrong. In the same way, life presents warnings that indicate that Satan is using a divide-and-conquer scheme to ultimately make you ineffective for God’s plans for your life. Be

not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and turn away from evil (Prov. 3:7). Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:11).

Four “Divide-And-Conquer” Schemes

1. Double-Minded Individuals

Satan is not concerned when you attend church on Sunday, so long as he is able to compartmentalize our lives into sacred and secular: “Praise The Lord” on Sunday; living the worldview of the society around us on Monday. The Bible refers to this as being “double-minded.” But once we realize that, here is what we can do:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. (James 1:5–8)

2. Families in Discord

Satan and his legions of demons will instigate discord in a marriage to the extent that the couple will believe that there is no way that the marriage can be salvaged; that dividing the family is the only recourse. *“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil”* (Eph. 4:26—27). (Yes, it actually says that in the Bible.) Download this next Scripture into your mind, and start to live by it. Do it. Do it now. *“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or*

rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”(1 Cor. 13:4–7).

Incidentally: When the “kick-back” response to something you said is massively out of proportion to what you said, when it seems like you stepped on a land mine, you can be sure that you are talking to someone who has a demonic stronghold (fortress) in them. Instead, we must respond in this way: *“Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.* (James 1:19b–20) We are to be:

Quick to hear God’s point of view.

Slow to speak my point of view.

Slow to anger—when my point of view differs from God’s point of view.

2. Churches in Disunity

Satan and his legions of demons will construct the thinking of a group in a church congregation such that—rather than realizing that our strength is in our unity—an entire body of believers will choose to walk out. They leave because they don’t know Scriptures such as this:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful

schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Eph. 4:11–16)

On a personal note, I myself watched with astonishment as the church I once was in allowed the devil to work his divide-and-conquer scheme on the congregation—twice! To this day, I do not understand why some pastors are not teaching these truths to their people.

4. Society Divided

We can almost see the puppet strings attached to many “leaders” in high places in government. And see the result: Satan has caused our own government to push almost anything having to do with God out of the public square. Thus we have high school boys armed with powerful weapons of war walking into schools and slaughtering students and teachers. And do we not see—almost on a daily basis—the shocking stories of sexual immorality committed by powerful men in otherwise respected companies—as well as clergy members victimizing young children? It’s astonishing that nobody talks about “the elephant in the room”—namely, that Satan and his legions of demons are orchestrating all of these things.

And why not? They have arranged for our public schools to teach our children that evolution and science—not those silly fairy-tales in the Bible—can (or soon will) explain everything in the universe. But true, unbiased science supports Creation, not evolution. The forces of evil laugh at us. Satan and his legions of demons have kept most Christians from knowing a critically important truth: God does not function in a context of disunity. Thus the enemy strives to keep the human race in disarray. But the demons are loyal to their commander. They are not a house

divided. But here are our weapons—our power to overcome.

The Whole Armor of God

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places.

Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints.” (Eph. 6:10–18)

Here is how we ought to regard one another: *“Peace be to the brothers,[and sisters] and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible”* (Eph. 6:23–24). Love incorruptible? Nothing I might add could top that.

Chapter 15

The Meaning of Life

The meaning of life—our primary purpose—is to give our hearts to God, and then help others to

do the same.  Imagine the dot and the line. Let's say that the dot is 1/8-inch square: The point is: that little dot represents your life, around seventy-five years on average. Let's also imagine that the line represents the eternal life of your soul and spirit. This is the real "you." The line represents a row of dots. Every seventy-five years, another dot is added to the end of the line. Thus one inch of "line" contains eight "dots," and represents 600 years. Therefore one foot (12 inches) is: $12 \times 600 = 7200$ years. And therefore, 1 mile (5280 feet) is: $7200 \times 5280 = 38,016,000$ years. That's over 38 million years, and the line hasn't even reached the edge of town yet. To put it back into seventy-five-year lifetimes, one mile would represent 506,880 lifetimes.

Are you with me so far? Good. Now, here's what all that means: Your line comes into being at the same moment as your human life does. But, unlike the dot, the line continues to live on forever after your body dies. Have you ever thought of this? The real "you" is already in eternity. The arrowhead at the end of the timeline indicates that the line continues beyond this screen. In fact, the line never ends. The line, representing your immortal soul, comes into being when your human body does, but it extends off the screen and continues on and on forever.

In the timeline diagram, the line is about fifty times longer than the dot, again depending on your device. Assuming an average life span of seventy-five years, the line represents nearly 4,000 years of your eternal life. The line had a beginning, but it will never end. The line goes off the screen you are viewing this on and extends out into space. For example: When the line extends to the orbit of the moon, over 121 billion lifetimes. That's just to the moon.  When the line of seventy-five-year lifetimes reaches the Orion Nebula (about 1,300 light years distant), more than 3.8 billion trillion lifetimes will have passed.  Do you realize this? When this imaginary line of seventy-five-year lifetimes eventually reaches to the edge of the

universe, it will still represent just the first moment of eternity. Your transformed body and spirit—conscious and aware—will live on throughout trillions upon trillions upon trillions of lifetimes eternally. The question is where?

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? (Matt. 16:26)

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. (Phil. 3: 20–21)

Our purpose in life is to help one another to get ready to go home.

Chapter 16

Why the Universe and the Human Race Exist

The reason we are here is to demonstrate that human beings can do what the more powerful angels in heaven refused to do. The human race exists because of a rebellion among the angels that erupted in the heavenly realm before God created the universe. Everything I'm writing is well supported by Scripture. In this chapter, I'm giving you a summary of the details. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The first part of His creation was to create the "angelic realm." He also created innumerable angels. He created them so that He could love them. All He asked of them was that they would love Him.

In this eternal, heavenly realm, the highest ranking angel was named Lucifer, which means

“Shining One.” But something went wrong. Lucifer was so magnificent, so powerful, that pride welled up in him. We would say he “got the big head.” He was so powerful, so magnificent, that he—the creature—believed that he deserved to have his own kingdom where God would have to share His glory with Lucifer and have lesser angels worship him. But God does not share His glory with anyone. “I am the Lord; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols” (Isa. 42:8).

All of us are caught in the crossfire of a conflict that we did not start, but from which we cannot escape. This conflict erupted in the angelic realm—the heavenly realm—in eternity past, long before the natural realm (the universe) and Adam and Eve even existed. What Lucifer really wanted was something that only God had: independence. Lucifer intended to exalt himself above God. “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). Lucifer presented his plan—his “marketing strategy”—to all the angels. So enticing was his plan that he persuaded a third of the angels to join him in his rebellion. They demanded the right to set up their own kingdom.

There’s a lesson in that for us. Consider: if Lucifer was that persuasive, that crafty, that cunning in his appeal to the angels (remember: angels are perfect beings, living in a perfect place) and yet they bought Lucifer’s lies, we don’t stand a chance when we try to live apart from God. That rebellion turned out to be an incredibly foolish strategy. That’s what pride does to a person. Here was a creature demanding to have all the powers and attributes of the Creator. Lucifer was given the name “Satan” (which means “accuser”) and was cast out of heaven, along with all of his followers. They were exiled to a watery, formless, dark place called: “Earth.” Satan and his legions of demons were judged and sentenced ultimately to what Scripture calls “everlasting fire” and “the lake of fire.” They protested, arguing that their sentence was unfair. But God was

way ahead of them.

Instead of just snuffing these evil, rebellious angelic beings out of existence, God decided to actually use their rebellion in order to demonstrate His omnipotence—and in the process gain more glory for Himself. God’s plan was to show that He could create a race of lesser beings (the human race) and demonstrate that humans—by freely choosing to live in obedience to God—would advance further with God than did the more powerful angelic beings who chose to rebel. In so doing, God would embarrass Lucifer and expose him as a fraud. This entire angelic conflict reduces to one word: *glory*. Lucifer insisted that God must share His glory with him. But as stated earlier, God has declared that He does not share His glory with anyone. Then God unfolded the next part of His plan: He created the “natural realm”—the universe and all that is in it—including time itself. We read in the Bible how God caused light to come back to Earth, how God separated the land from the water, and how He created all kinds of plants and animals. And then, God did something spectacular: He created the first human beings: a man and a woman—Adam and Eve. Well you know what happened: Satan, appearing to Eve in the form of a serpent, engaged Eve with his smooth talk. Eve chose to believe Satan’s “re-interpretation” of God’s Word. Thus Satan enticed Eve to disobey God, and she ate the forbidden fruit. The lying snake reassured Eve that there would be no consequences for what was being portrayed by the snake as a trivial, inconsequential little issue. Finally, the snake influenced Eve’s thinking, getting her to use her womanly powers of persuasion to entice Adam to buy in—and Adam also ate the forbidden fruit. And so the conflict/contest began:

In order to demonstrate that He was indeed acting fairly, God set up conditions for humans similar to the conditions that the fallen angels failed to uphold. God put Lucifer in charge over all the angels in heaven. God gave Adam dominion over the whole Earth. Lucifer and all the angels

of heaven were perfectly created beings—with immortality. Adam and Eve were perfectly created beings—also with immortality. God instructed all of the angels as to their assigned tasks. God also instructed Adam and Eve as to what to eat and what not to eat.

Lucifer and all the angels of heaven were in a perfect place in the heavenly realm called “Eden.” Adam and Eve were in a perfect place in the natural realm called “Eden.” Lucifer and all the angels of heaven had a free will, the ability to choose to obey or disobey. Adam and Eve also had a free will. They were not restrained from choosing against God’s command. Lucifer and the angels had direct, intimate fellowship with God. Adam and Eve walked with God in the cool of the evening. After Satan and his followers sinned, they were cast out of Eden in the heavenly realm. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were banished from Eden in the natural realm.

One more similarity: The Bible teaches that the eventual destination for Satan and his fallen angels will be eternal punishment in the “lake of fire.” Sadly, the Bible also teaches that humans who choose not to accept God’s free gift of eternal joy in heaven with Him will get what they wanted on Earth: separation from God. Their destination will also be in the “lake of fire.”

“Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire” (Matt. 25:41). Lucifer found himself in “damage control” mode: Satan (formerly “Lucifer”) heard God say to Adam and Eve that Eve’s “seed”—one of her descendants—would “crush his head.” So, Satan set about trying to take control of Eve’s offspring.

A few of Satan’s Attempts

Satan stirred up Cain to kill Abel, believing that he had taken care of this “seed” problem. Satan didn’t know that Adam and Eve would have a son named Seth, nor that Seth would one day become the father of Enoch—and at that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord. When Satan caused people to begin constructing a great tower reaching to heaven (getting to

heaven by “works”), God sowed confusion into their minds by creating foreign languages among the peoples. Satan went global with his “seed-control” program. He sent his demonic “sons of God” to take control of human men. These demon-possessed men had relations with human women, who gave birth to hideous, wicked giants called the Nephilim. God’s counter-move was to destroy all of them with the great flood. All, that is, except one righteous man named Noah. With Noah and his family, God re-started the whole human race.

Satan caused King Herod to slaughter all the male children under the age of two years. But an angel warned Mary and Joseph to take their son, Jesus, and flee to Egypt.

Satan really thought he had won when he arranged for Judas to betray Jesus, then for Jesus to be arrested and falsely accused, then to have Jesus nailed to a cross and crucified. But Satan did not know about grace. Imagine the shock on Satan’s face when he realized how he had played right into God’s hands. The Jews were expecting a powerful leader who would get them out from under the rule of the Roman empire. They had no idea that this Messiah had anything to do with atoning for their sins. They believed they would continue sacrificing animals to God as payment for sins. What Satan didn’t know—and what many people to this day don’t seem to know—is that Jesus Christ’s death on a cross was God’s plan from the beginning as a means of dealing with the inevitable sins of all human beings.

Jesus literally became one of us so that He could live a totally perfect, sinless life and thus be qualified to be an acceptable sacrifice for all the sins of all humanity. He took upon Himself the sins of the entire human race in exchange for His righteousness before God. Jesus has paid the full price for all the sins of all the people—for all time: past sins, present sins, and future sins.

“But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. For

by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified ” (Heb. 10:12–14). So where does all of this leave us? Now, we are all born under the curse of Adam’s sin. Because of the sin of our first parents, humans gave dominion of the Earth back to Satan. This angelic conflict continues to this day. The only satisfaction Satan has now is to try to keep human souls from going to heaven. Satan wants to “stick it to Jesus” by taking as many of us into the lake of fire with him as he can. Satan realizes that he cannot overpower God. So instead, Satan and his legions of demons work tirelessly with the goal of controlling the thinking of every one of us—and to do so without our awareness. As I wrote at the beginning of this article: The reason we are here is to demonstrate that human beings can do what the more powerful angels in heaven refused to do. We willingly choose to live under God’s authority. Besides that, Jesus already won the victory for us. All we have to do is—as Paul wrote: *“Put on the armor of God, to stand against the schemes of the devil”* (Eph. 6:11).