

FREED

TO LIVE

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The Transforming Power of God

Winning Victory in Spiritual Warfare

FREED TO LIVE

Anne S. White

A book to challenge others to accept freedom through scriptural, balanced teaching and the witness of some of many thousands who have been freed to live as the Lord has used Victorious Ministry Through Christ (VMTC) to fulfill His promises in Luke 4:18-19:

“to set the captives free, to give sight to the blind and to open prison doors.”

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DEDICATION

This book is gratefully dedicated to my Heavenly Father; my Savior and Healer, Jesus Christ; and to the Holy Spirit, who guides and empowers my life.

To my loving husband, Richard, now in Glory, and to my daughter and son, Maryanna and Richard, for their loving, prayerful support of the VMTC Ministry as a “third child” in our lives.

To the loving, faithful, ecumenical Board of Directors and team members of Victorious Ministry Through Christ-USA . Their sacrificial commitment has enabled this ministry to survive and grow.

To the VMTC International Board of Directors, the VMTC Boards in different countries, and the VMTC prayer ministers abroad. They have heard and fulfilled the Lord’s call to extend this scriptural ministry to bless those to whom they minister, and to deepen the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewal of the Church. They have transplanted VMTC Ministry to Australia, Canada, Finland, Sweden, Pakistan, Norway, and New Zealand.

PREFACE

For several years, the Lord has been laying on my heart the need to write a new book. I had good intentions to do just that but was thwarted by a very busy traveling schedule.

One night, I prayed: “Lord, I really have no desire to write another book; I haven’t time to do it. Besides, proofreading manuscripts is wearisome work. But, if this is something You really want me to do, You’ll have to anoint me with Your message. And, please enable our secretary and me to flow in the Spirit so the manuscript can be completed before I leave for Singapore in two months.” Then, I began preparing to go to bed. It was 10 o’clock. I had planned a busy next day at the office.

Suddenly, I knew I had to go to my Florida room. My Florida room is where I always experience God’s peace during my quiet time each morning. From its glass-enclosed room I can look out on the miniature garden the Lord guided me to landscape. I had moved favorite shrubs, ferns and plants from my previous home so I wouldn’t be homesick in the new setting.

Two hours later, the beginning of the first chapter the Lord wanted me to write was recorded on my yellow pad! The next day, our secretary Kathy Hummel typed it into the word processor. So began the fulfillment of my commitment. The manuscript was completed in between trips to Atlanta, New Mexico, New Orleans, Singapore and Sweden. Each night, as I prayed, the Lord’s message flowed smoothly through me. Each morning, Kathy typed and printed it out for me to proofread that night. Working closely with Kathy was a joy. Her constructive comments and Christian perspective made her far more valuable than just her typing. The Lord answered my prayer for us to flow in the Spirit.

I was also blessed by the much-needed editorial help of several members of our Board of Directors: the Rev. Drs. Clifford Horvath, Kenneth Sprinkle and Alfred Salt, the Revs. Vernon Stoop and William Westlund. They carefully read this manuscript and encouraged me with their perspective on the teachings as well as with some of their personal experiences.

Gems from my rector’s anointed sermons often flowed unconsciously into this text. The Rev. and Mrs. Roger Miller wrote detailed, helpful suggestions strengthening the clarity of the original version. Our Associate Central Coordinator and his wife, the Rev. and Mrs. Bruce Urich, cheerfully took over the exacting

burden of careful proofreading and tedious checking of Scripture references, rough draft, and final manuscript. My prayer partner, Loretta Moore, read it as we traveled to Singapore. Two of her stories are included in the text. Thank you to the “walking miracles” who allowed me to use their encouraging testimonies.

My prayer is this teaching book with real-life stories from VMTC prayer ministry, as well as from my personal life, will help readers to grow in awareness of the surety of God’s wisdom, faithfulness and love. I used personal stories to help others to see how VMTC Prayer Ministry helps “to set captives free, to give sight to the blind and to open prison doors”. This scriptural, balanced, Spirit-led ministry has proven to be a valuable tool of ministry within the Church, the body of Christ. Committed Christians can truly become freed to live in the power of the Holy Spirit!

May *Freed to Live* help readers to see and experience the reality of the victory of Calvary and the power of the Holy Spirit today. May this message whet the appetites of those who need to experience the very real and lasting blessings received in VMTC Prayer Ministry. VMTC Prayer Ministry is a ministry which helps to bring renewal in the Church. It strengthens clergy and lay leadership to stand fast in today’s ever-increasing spiritual warfare.

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Editor’s Note: Mrs. Anne S. White was called home to her Heavenly Father on January 11, 2000. The ministry continues and is spreading under the care of the VMTC-USA Board of Directors and the VMTC International Board of Directors.

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INTRODUCTION

Life for most people is one struggle after another, one fight after another, one rejection or failure after another with very little hope of enjoying life to its fullest. There is always “something or someone else”. We long to soar, but every time we try to fly we find ourselves tethered to the ground by some invisible force. *Freed to Live* is filled with stories of people, just like you, people who longed to soar, but their wings were clipped by life. As they were prayer ministered, they discovered the way to overcome the burdens of life, dump the anchors holding them down, and were set free to live.

I was one of those folk. Then, I met Anne S. White. That was in 1977 at a School of Prayer Ministry in Columbus, Ohio. I discovered I was not a very good flyer. I was weighed down by resentments, failures, judgments, criticalness, pride, prejudice, arrogance, and the list goes on. I had been born again and baptized in the Spirit. Still, I was unfulfilled. I longed to be free, to enjoy my wife and children, my family, my church, and my calling. While I was looking good on the outside, I was a mess on the inside. My purpose in going to the School was to get some tools to help others with their mess. What I received was not only the realization I was the mess but the pathway to freedom.

This book reveals some of the things that kept me weighed down and new patterns leading to being freed to live. As you read the stories and the Scriptures, you may find yourself brought up short by similarities to your own story. The fantastic news is, there is hope. The Father wants you to know His love. He has made a way to transform your life from being “tied down” to one of soaring, one “freed to live” in a whole new way, day after day. He longs to help you write your story of one freed to live. As you read this book, I hope you will discover the possibility of a way to freedom, no longer bound up and weighed down by life; and seek to know more about “Victorious Ministry Through Christ”.

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Overcome by Life or by the Power of the Spirit?

One of the signs of our times is feeling overcome by life. Physically, mentally, economically, emotionally, and spiritually the world seems to be headed on a collision course labeled “bankruptcy.” The nuclear threat hangs like a huge cloud. Men cry, “‘Peace, peace’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14). Jesus’ warning rings fresh today: “Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.” (Matthew 24:4-8 NIV).

Our call is to be overcomers by the power of the Spirit. We are not to be overcome by the powers of darkness. The apostle John wrote: “this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” (I John 5:3-4). In a world of violence and hate, we are called to show the love of God. We are to have spiritual fervor in the Spirit (Romans 12:11), not quenching God’s power with faithless fears. Paul wrote words for today: “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline”—not of fear but of a sound mind (II Timothy 1:7).

In place of lifestyles of depression, bitterness, self-pity, loneliness, and lack of purpose, God has predestined us, His sons and daughters *in Christ*, to fulfill His purposes. He has had these purposes for us from before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4-5). We are not to succumb to confusion and powerlessness. Our Heavenly Father is not “the author of confusion but of peace” (I Corinthians 14:33 (KJV)). Instead of allowing sick emotions to cause sick bodies, He calls us to yield ourselves totally to Jesus’ healing power. Instead of allowing broken relationships to cripple us and those we love, God’s will is for us to be made whole, healed in spirit, soul, and body.

Today, everyone seems to have a problem or be a problem. For men, fierce competition to be successful causes tensions that can lead to high blood pressure, a stroke, or a heart attack. With uncertainties in the economic world, the high cost of living, cutthroat business competition, dangers of the political situation, fear of

war, a man can feel overcome by life. Each man needs the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain him. Jesus promised His twelve disciples to send the Holy Spirit to guide them into the Truth. A man needs the Holy Spirit's wisdom for himself and his family.

For women Jesus' answer to life is vital! Women live in the center of a wheel of relationships—husband, children, parents, in-laws, neighbors, teachers, employers, and friends. A woman's attitudes affect her relationships. A mother taking depression out on her children may see it reflected on report cards. The husband leaving for work without a cheerful, loving embrace may not be prepared for the boss' reprimand or a failed contract. A critical word about a neighbor's child can begin a neighborhood feud. The quick retort to a demanding mother-in-law may increase family tension and cause buried wounds of the spirit!

How can women carry accusations, frustrations, and fears and not be emotional wrecks? If they try to escape through television or reading, the stark realities of their lives will remain. If cigarettes become crutches, they can lead to cancer or heart disease and even harm children. If women escape through overeating, they can hate themselves for looking and feeling bulkier. Problems seem to breed more problems. A day of rest is never a reality.

Bearing the stress of life, a woman may think, "No one understands the horrendous financial problems of my family," or "No one is aware of my husband's terrible anger." She may say, "No one realizes how my mother-in-law tears me down," or "No one can imagine how my children exasperate me." She may carry the burden of living next to a bad neighbor or dealing with a difficult employer. She may work to meet the cost of living increases or to continue a career. Perhaps she is involved in outside activities to cope with the stress of empty nest loneliness.

Even more complicated are divorced or widowed men and women trying to re-stabilize life. Being a single parent is difficult, especially when forced to be the breadwinner. Being a parent and breadwinner consume all their energies. Opportunities for adult fellowship are limited. Loneliness becomes a real problem.

There is One who understands your situation and stresses. He cares about what you are going through. He promised, "to be with you always, even to the end of time" (Matthew 28:20). Jesus wants you to come to Him NOW—all of you who are worn out and carrying heavy burdens. He wants to refresh you. He wants to heal you of jealousy and bitterness, fear of rejection and buried resentments, low self-esteem, fear of confrontation, and self-pity. They are poisoning you in spirit, crippling your will, churning your emotions, and destroying your peace of mind. No wonder your body reacts to all of this in *dis*-ease.

You may want God to change *others*. He wants to begin with *you*! As you allow Jesus to become fully the Lord of your life, you will live in His strength, not your own. You can say with Paul: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). You can claim with him: “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:57). You will grasp the reality of the promise, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

As a child of God, there is no hurt, affliction, or evil that can break you—unless you give up the battle. To capitulate and throw in the towel means misusing our God-given freedom of will. My rector challenged us recently: “Don’t pull the plug! Out of great turmoil, God often brings something better. We have to hang in there until He brings His healing, transforming power into our situation.” The life of an overcomer is tested in battle. We grow our spiritual muscles through these battles. Our God reigns over the circumstances that seem to us so hopeless. We need to praise Him in the midst of them that *He is still God!*

Persevering is a scriptural but not always popular teaching. Abraham waited 25 years for Isaac, the child of promise. Paul, an experienced Jewish rabbi, spent years after his dramatic conversion searching Scripture and maturing in Christ. Yet, our culture demands instant everything. We need instant oatmeal, instant divorce, instant success.

What a contrast to the imperative Jesus expressed: “Ask, and keep on asking; seek, and keep on seeking; knock, and keep on knocking” (Matthew 7:7). My rector’s recent sermon gave a practical example of this using a baby chicken: “peck, and keep on pecking.” When the chick finds his protected environment too cramped, he begins to peck his way out of the shell. He keeps on pecking until free to move in a new way.

Often we humans stop short of victory because we will not pray and keep on praying! The enemy tries to discourage us from perseverance by false insinuations: “Don’t you know you’re going to fail?” or “What makes you think you can do this?” or “What will people think?” or “You’re making a fool of yourself.”

Satan tempted Elijah with discouragement. He tried to make him give up being serious about God. Finally, Elijah cried out, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life” (I Kings 19:4). Our personal enemy tries to tempt us to despair. He wants us to give in to his temptations. Instead, practice the wisdom in James 4:7: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

Someone said: “God will fix a fix to fix you—and if you unfix the fix before He fixes you, He will fix another fix to fix you.” Often, in the midst of our fix, our Heavenly Father is training us in spiritual discipline. He knows our need to learn to trust totally in Him. If we try to escape from necessary testing, God may bring us back into a similar situation to learn the lesson. He does this because He loves us. He wants His best for us. Learning His lessons enables us to bear more fruit.

Begin by giving God your preconceived concepts. Ask Him to clean out any unscriptural confusion of His will and purposes. Seek Him for a clear, fresh understanding of the truth of Scripture. Look at the Bible as the drama of redemption, God bringing about His purpose in our lives. Then, we can build our lives on the firm foundation of its truth, not on the shifting sands of secular humanism. Seek to know the promises of His Word, the basis for becoming an overcomer. Walk in the power of His Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 25). Jesus calls you and me to be “more than conquerors” in today’s turmoil (Romans 8:37). Will you seek His victory in your life?

The Drama of Redemption

Our Heavenly Father, the all-powerful God, created us in His own image. He gives us the freedom to choose to live in unity with His purposes or to live in rebellion. In rebellion, we try to play God in our lives and the lives of others. Satan clearly rebelled against God's authority. He fell from heaven as a result of his pride and violence and tries to influence us to follow his wicked, rebellious ways (Isaiah 14:12-15).

Scripture tells us Satan, also called Lucifer, was created blameless, one of the most beautiful angels. His pride caused his downfall. He plotted a rebellion against God. Satan's ambition was to sit on God's throne and make himself "like the Most High." Because he sinned and was filled with violence, he was cast "as a profane thing from the mountain of God" and one-third of the angels fell with him. In Ezekiel 28:17, we read: "Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor."

Does this warn us? What about violence, pride, and lust for splendor or personal glory in our lives today?

Since Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness three times, we can be sure he will tempt us, often the same ways. The first temptation for Jesus, to turn stones into bread, involved appetite. The second temptation, to give Jesus authority over the world's kingdoms, involved ambition. The third one, to cast Himself from the top of the temple, involved applause. Jesus resisted these strategies and rebuked Satan by quoting the Word of God decisively. "So the devil departed from Him until a more opportune time" (Luke 4:1-13). (See *Jesus, All in All*, chapter VIII for more details about resisting Satan through spiritual warfare.)

How can we follow our Master who was tempted as we are but did not sin? Our ancestors, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. They succumbed to the temptation to eat the forbidden fruit. Today, the serpent, Satan, tempts us to make choices contrary to our Heavenly Father's will.

Our sinful nature is inherited from Adam and Eve down through generations. It can be redeemed only when we are born again into the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ. In John 3:5-6, Jesus said, "Truly, truly . . . unless one is born of water

and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Being spiritually reborn is a vital and necessary step for each one of us. This opposes humanistic teachings which tempt us to believe we can play God.

When we are born again, our sinful nature is broken as the Holy Spirit enters and resides in our spirits. Then, we can call Jesus “Lord” in the depth of our beings. “No one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (I Corinthians 12:3).

This new birth experience deals with our sin nature. Can we still sin? Yes. Many Scriptures on the confession of sin are found in the epistles to the churches. 1John 1:8-9 says, “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, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Christian believers can say, “We have been saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved.” Salvation begins when we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Becoming “conformed to His image” is a lifelong process (Romans 8:29).

We are justified or made right with God by faith in Jesus. We are sanctified, purified, by His Spirit abiding in us. This enables us to bear the fruit of the Spirit. Jesus gave us the key. He said: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4-5) An orange tree takes time to grow and bear fruit. As we live in union with Jesus as our King and Master, we become fruit bearers.

God has called each of us from before the foundation of the world in Christ Jesus to be His sons and daughters (Ephesians 1:4-6). We are called to *be* His will—not just *do* His will. How easy it is to forget *being* in our eagerness to serve Him with our many *doings*.

Our Heavenly Father has given us that most precious of all gifts—the gift of His Son. Through His perfect obedience to the Father, dying in the most painful and degrading way, Jesus restores what Adam lost in the fall. Jesus has given us the Holy Spirit to make possible for us this salvation (wholeness) experience. As the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus, so Jesus glorifies the Father. The Holy Spirit abiding in our spirits will enable our lives to glorify both our Heavenly Father and Jesus.

When we decide to follow Jesus, we have a personal Savior. We also have a personal enemy, Satan, the same one Jesus had. Satan is always trying to deceive or falsely accuse us. He wants to rob us of the victory Jesus won for us on Calvary.

Scripture says: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (I John 3:8). No wonder Satan did his best to destroy Jesus. But the resurrection proved Satan to be a defeated foe. Praise God!

In Hebrews 2:14-15 and 17-18, we read: “Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. . . Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. Because he suffered and was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.”

Paul gives us a clear warning to avoid being like the Israelites who grumbled in disobedience after God had brought them safely out of Egypt. Therefore they “were unable to enter (the Promised Land) because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19). That generation had to die off. They could not enter the Promised Land because of disobedience.

Perhaps when we are going through suffering in life, we need to read a little further about Jesus in this important letter to the Hebrews until we come to verses 8 and 9 in chapter 5: “Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him. . .” Jesus helps to deliver us from disobedience and gives us wholeness for living.

Like the disciples at Pentecost, you and I can receive the empowering of the Holy Spirit prophesied by the prophet Joel (2:28-32). Joel’s words were confirmed by the disciples’ changed lives following that first dramatic experience in the Upper Room (Acts 2:1-4). After that, the Peter who had denied Jesus preached eloquently. 3,000 people were converted in one sermon. We read, “...many wonders and signs were done through the apostles” (Acts 2:43b). “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47b).

The early Christian Church grew strong in spite of cruel persecution by sadistic Roman emperors. The emperors wanted to wipe out the worship of Jesus. They desired to be worshipped as gods.

Today, humanists seek to wipe out the worship of Jesus. New Age philosophies and cults emphasize the deification of man. They want man to usurp God’s place. We Christians are called to unite against these forces of evil. We are called to be overcomers in the Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. Christians are not to be spectators. We are called to conquer the ways of the

world, the flesh, and the devil. We are to be especially vigilant to stop their infiltration into the teaching and practice of the Church.

Jesus gave us His call and His promise in Revelation 3:21-22: “He who conquers I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” He who conquers refers not to fighting each other. It refers to overcoming the forces of evil subtly or flagrantly trying to take over the Church, the nation, the world. We today have the same challenge to withstand evil. “And they have conquered him by the Blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death” (Revelation 12:11).

A pastor writes about his journey to becoming an overcomer and conqueror: “For me, VMTC prayer ministry has been a freeing, a strengthening, and an undergirding experience. I had been shaped by the emotional absence of my father, culminating in his suicide when I was nineteen, and the sweet controls of my mother, which made it difficult for me to know what I really wanted. I became a Presbyterian minister, interestingly enough, initially, to please her, but later to serve God.

“Like many mainline denominational people, I was deeply influenced during my college years by the humanistic philosophy I majored in and the Greek-based psychology I studied in my graduate work, and through books and movies. I even worked as a counselor in a psychiatric clinic where I know I was able to help people, but mostly through human help and knowledge.

“It was (and is) such a joy to be freed through VMTC prayer ministry: to know I can confess as sin, repent of and ask God’s forgiveness for all of the humanistic and secular thinking and reading and acts of my life. What a joy to discard from my library some books which had always made me feel very nervous anyway. I still have most of my theological and psychological books and the secular, psychological knowledge—but, as Anne White says, ‘it is the long way to help people who will not accept the scriptural conditions of VMTC prayer ministry.’

“What a joy to be freed from the need to try to control everything, to try to be president of every group! What a joy to be freed to face conflict, not fearing that conflict would destroy me or those around me—because now I know that I know that God is in charge!

“It was (and is) such a joy to be strengthened through VMTC prayer ministry so I am not frightened by thoughts from the past, or made helpless by the wounds of the past, such as those inflicted unknowingly by my parents, or by

people's words. I know-I can immediately claim God's help and power! It is such a joy to be undergirded through the scriptural teaching and practices of prayer ministry.

"Each morning I put on my spiritual armor like Christian in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and know God is with me to help me each moment of the day and night. It means so much to me to be able to pray for help and wisdom immediately. I will fail now only when I insist on having my own way, as His available power is greater than any need that I have. Praise God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!"

Now that he is free, this pastor can really preach the good news to set others free! He can help others to be overcomers and conquerors.

Many church members need to know they can become overcomers and conquerors. Most members are not even aware of the power of Jesus' victory or the reality of Satan as their personal adversary. A serious commitment to follow Jesus means having the same adversary who used one of Jesus' disciples to betray and try to destroy Him.

Satan fell from heaven because of rebellion against God. He is still creating rebellion in the Church whenever and wherever the Church seeks to bring in the kingdom of God on earth as it is in Heaven. When people are living lifestyles of rebellion against God, Satan can use them as tools. He influences them with demonic thoughts, especially when they open the door of their minds to his false teaching in pagan, demon worshiping religions.

Witchcraft today is on the increase. It uses psychic powers, dabbling in mind-control, out-of-body astral traveling, magic, and spiritualism. All are forbidden to those who believe in and follow Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Jesus did not teach us to be broad-minded or liberal condoners of false teachings and practices. They are part of an occult explosion that even invades the Church in some areas today.

Thousands of people in many countries have been set free from demonic oppression through the VMTC prayer ministry. Praise God! Jesus said He came to set captives free and give sight to the blind. Spiritual sight is even more important than physical sight. The drug and sex explosions are linked to the occult explosion. That is evident to all of us who minister in-depth to many distressed people who have lost their spiritual sight and wandered into the enemy's territory. Unfortunately, Satan plays for keeps. But Jesus forgives and heals us when we recognize and repent of our sins and ask His pardon. He can and will restore us.

Jesus said: “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” (Matthew 7:13-14). He warned His disciples saying: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

Are you, dear reader, playing Russian roulette with your life? Have you thought you can get away with habitual, prolonged sins? Please stop now and ask Jesus to forgive you. Tell Him you are truly repentant, not just sorry for yourself or sorry you got caught. Ask His pardon for every sin you can name specifically as well as for all sins you do not recall. Ask Jesus to forgive you for your sins against your own body and for your sins of reaction against others. Ask Him to forgive you for every sinful, wicked, lustful, hateful, angry thought, or word you can recall, no matter how long ago or what the circumstances. Do not rationalize. Repent!

Then, promise Jesus you are now, with His help, going to turn away from this mess you made of your life. Acknowledge you cannot possibly do this or live from now on without His help. Ask Jesus to come into your sinful heart now and clean out all the garbage of the past.

His Blood was shed for you personally. He will redeem you. He will give you His peace, replacing the burden of guilt you have carried for so long. Ask Him to be Lord now, to take charge of your life. Ask Him to be your Master and replace the other gods that have been controlling your life.

Begin to thank Him for His forgiveness, whether you feel like it or not. Stand on the promises in I John 1:9: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Trust in the authority of God’s Word, not your preconceived ideas. Believe you have received and you will receive it.

Praise Him now as an act of your will, regardless of your feelings. You may have a dramatic release through tears followed by an upsurge of His joy, or you may not. You have asked. Now, have confidence Jesus is trustworthy and will be true to the promises of Scripture. Accept the fact He has not only forgiven you but is also cleansing you with His perfect, pure Blood. Thank Him that His Holy Spirit now lives in your heart and accept His peace.

If you have meant all of this, you are now a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven. You have now been reborn in the Spirit. This means much more than going to Heaven when you die. You now have the Holy Spirit abiding in you to lead you into the truth that glorifies Jesus. You are a part of the drama of redemption. As you follow Jesus, you can experience His joy, love, and peace from now on. He is your Lord and Savior, your Burden Bearer, your Healer, and Redeemer. Praise God!

Some years ago, a VMTC prayer team ministered to a woman I will call Martha. Martha was furious at her father. He had sexually abused her as a teenager. He committed incest with her sister, resulting in a child. For years Martha hated her father but tried to repress her anger. A few days before her prayer ministry appointment, she learned her father had recently forced himself sexually on his 14-year-old grandchild and now the girl was pregnant. Martha was so enraged she wanted to kill him. Friends persuaded her not to go to her father's jail cell to express her hatred and wish for him to be dead. Instead, they persuaded her to receive the VMTC prayer ministry first.

During prayer ministry, she argued and stormed she would never forgive her father. Lovingly and patiently, her two ministers showed her that to fully experience God's forgiveness, she would have to forgive her father, to forgive him for all he had done to her sister, to his grandchild and to herself (Mark 11:25). Finally, she saw her own sins of thought, anger, and murder. She confessed to God. With the grace of God and seven hours of VMTC prayer ministry, Martha was set free. The spirits of anger and murder no longer controlled her.

At first, forgiveness was an act of her will. Then, to her amazement, the Heavenly Father's love enabled her to feel the reality of forgiveness for her earthly father. She could, at last, forgive the sinner even though she did not condone his sins.

When the session finally ended, she had received the empowering of the Holy Spirit to hold her victory. She received new freedom to love and forgive. Although it was getting late, Martha knew she had to go to the jail and tell her father about Jesus and His forgiving love. Tearfully, she forgave her father for every one of his sins. He looked at her and burst into tears. Martha led him to the Lord and a new peace came into his heart. They talked about his new life in Jesus. Then, she embraced him with real love as she said good-bye, for the last time. That night he went home to the Lord.

The drama of redemption continues.

THREE

From a Walking Wounded To a Walking Miracle

Healing of the whole person involves total healing. That's much more important than physical, mental, or emotional healing alone. The healing of relationships is also involved. It took a relationship with two human beings for us to be born, as well as a relationship with our Heavenly Father who, before the foundation of the world, called our lives into being.

For any of us to become whole, a relationship with Jesus Christ is necessary. It is only in Him "our release is secured and our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood" (Ephesians 1:7 New English Bible). When we accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, a new relationship is formed with the Holy Spirit. We are reborn or born of the Spirit. Scripture reminds us that no one can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3b).

Many years ago, as I ministered in prayer groups and at my church's healing services, the Lord showed me most people are victims of their own sins or the sins of others, or both. Those people were usually unaware of the spiritual warfare going on in their lives. Often they blamed God. Yet, the root cause of their problems was the enemy tempting them to sin. They had turned away from the healing only Jesus can bring to distressed minds, wounded spirits, disturbed emotions, sick bodies, and broken relationships. As I looked about me, churches seemed to be filled with walking wounded instead of the walking miracles seen in the early Christian Church.

When we do sin, confession of sin opens the door to God's healing forgiveness. Burdens of guilt are removed, often leading to the healing of spirit, soul, and body. For centuries, this has been part of the ministry of Roman Catholic and Episcopal (Anglican) Churches. In John's Gospel Jesus said to the crippled man He healed at the pool of Bethesda, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you" (5:14).

Sins of the spirit, mind, and body may not always be the cause of *dis-ease*. Yet, endocrinology medical studies have taught us our emotions release glandular

secretions which can cause serious illness. We have learned that the thoughts held in our subconscious minds have a profound effect on the autonomic nervous system, the automatic functioning of our bodies. Many doctors tell us that emotions such as fear can make us more subject to catch diseases, more accident-prone, more vulnerable to heart trouble and high blood pressure, as well as allergies, and even some forms of cancer.

The Bible confirms sin can affect our bodies. In Psalms 32:3-4 we read: “When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.” The psalmist acknowledged his sin, no longer hiding his iniquity but confessing his transgressions. Then the Lord forgave “the guilt of (his) sin” (Psalms 32:5). In Proverbs 17:22 we read: “A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.”

When we confess our sin, our lives are more yielded to the working of the Holy Spirit. We can limit the fullness of life in the Spirit by yielding to the soul. The soul includes the will, the emotions, the intellect, and the subconscious mind. When we live in our emotions or our intellects, we will not be aglow with the Spirit. For example, the spirit of fear entering early in life may be quenching the Holy Spirit. We may even desire to live in the power of the Spirit. Yet, some past experience of fear can dominate our responses today. Instead of acting on the basis of the present, we may be reacting to some controlling, buried emotion or painful experience, often without knowing why.

In one case a young pastor’s wife, a fine, committed, Spirit-filled young woman, was becoming totally neurotic with fear. Fear was even keeping her from going to the basement to do laundry. Over a period of several years, various evangelists, church members, and her own gifted, loving husband, ministered to her, but to no avail. Her increasing terror had no medical solution. Her husband was at his wit’s end because of her suffering, causing repercussions affecting their two young children and the church.

Well-meaning people telling her to name and claim her healing only made matters worse. She was totally unable to help herself. Various sessions of deliverance ministry without confession, repentance, and forgiveness left her worse off.

Finally, she and her husband traveled over a thousand miles to one of VMTC’s schools. There the Lord’s healing power transformed her from a walking wounded to a walking miracle. Praise God! She has since become a very effective prayer minister and has been used by the Lord to extend His healing power to others.

In the last prayer ministry session in that same school, her husband was an intercessor in the session of the director's 16-year-old son David. David was prevented from keeping up with his high school class because of crippling headaches. His scholastic record was affected.

David's doctor had arranged for every possible medical test, including CAT scans. The cause could not be determined. He progressively got worse. Even when he wanted to be well for special sports or family outings, headaches would suddenly come upon him for no apparent reason.

In that night's prayer ministry session, the Holy Spirit gave the husband a word of knowledge identifying the hidden cause. As a 7-year-old, David had watched a particularly horror-filled TV program. When the word of knowledge was given, David anguished as he relived the violence of horrendous scenes of terror repressed in his subconscious mind. The love of Jesus cast out all the fear affecting his autonomic nervous system. The headaches were gone. The power of the Holy Spirit overcame the power of evil. David was set free to joyously live a full life.

Some years later, both David's father and the young pastor whose wife was healed became members of the Board of Directors of Victorious Ministry Through Christ. They joined other board members who had also experienced the blessings of this Spirit-filled ministry. Because of being set free in new effectiveness, each board member has found VMTC to be a valuable, scriptural tool in local church ministry. This has led to the expansion of VMTC ministry to other countries, evidencing the Spirit of God at work. The wounded can be healed and the Lord Jesus can be glorified as He uses us to set captives free, give sight to the blind, and open prison doors (Luke 4:18-19).

A Presbyterian pastor's wife shared this witness: "I was the product of my parents' conflicting desires. My mother conceived me despite her unwillingness and was duty-bound to care for a child that she could not love emotionally. My father's part of this conflict destroyed their oneness and bound him to the child of his insistence in protectiveness and affection that was both smothering and idolatrous.

"The affection of my father was dependent upon my actions. A single misstep produced a separateness and loneliness that filled me with doubts about my worth and about his words of love. Fearing that I would cross the limits of his love, I lived carefully and endeavored to be as pleasing as possible.

"Mother took excellent care of me physically, but only once was I in my mother's arms. It was Christmas and I was allowed to sit on her lap. I feigned sleep to hold onto that brief moment knowing I soon would fail her and say in true sorrow, 'I'm sorry, Mama.' Her reply was as certain as my apology, 'If you were

really sorry, you wouldn't have done it!' It was the litany of my childhood. Something was wrong in our family and most assuredly it was me!

"I became fearful of life and relationships. Like Job, those things I feared kept recurring. I grew into adulthood desiring security that no relationship provided. I feared people would get to know the real me and find out how absolutely worthless I was.

"I perceived the Heavenly Father in the limited and distorted relationship I shared with my parents. In spite of years of Bible study, a Christian college, and my earnest desire to please God, He became the one who loved those He chose. He loved me not at all or only because it was His duty. He seemed to be fickle and not to be depended upon, because I was not worthy of His Love.

"The one thing I could grasp was that my husband was given to me as a parable of the Father's love. He was the only person I ever completely trusted. In all our years together, he had never rejected me—not once—not in the good times and never in the difficult. Daily, he told me how beautiful I was and that I was more precious to him than any save the Lord. God placed me in his committed care. The Lord often reminded me my husband's love was a parable for that greater truth I needed. He was preparing me for the deep healing that no one person could give me . . . the healing of the whole me . . . the removal of crutches and of festered wounds!

"My day of release came when my husband and I entered a VMTC Clergy School of Prayer Ministry to learn how to help others, not realizing how desperately my husband and I needed help. No Band-Aids were plastered on the old wounds. In that time of spiritual surgery, the Holy Spirit did a thorough cleansing and healing of all the pain of a lifetime. For the first time, I knew the Father loved me and declared me His own beloved child. He wasn't angry with me! I belonged! Fear fell away when rejection and worthlessness were cast out of me. The words 'accepted in the beloved' came alive and have lived in me each day since. Today I walk tall and straight. Life in His love is an adventure! My loyalty to VMTC prayer ministry is deep and abiding as I can now abide in Jesus: the old torment is gone and I'm really alive! Praise God!"

The writer and her husband are now VMTC prayer ministers. They use this ministry to the Lord's glory in their church. Because they have been made whole, they can help others become whole. Because they have become walking miracles, others can become walking miracles. They take others on God's glorious journey in the Holy Spirit.

God is Faithful

God is faithful (1 Corinthians 1:9,10:13; 1 Peter 4:19). We need to build our house of life on the Lord's faithfulness as revealed in His Word. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:7 that we live and "walk by faith, not by sight [living our lives in a manner consistent with our confident belief in God's promises]" (AMP).

To be faithful is a challenge to be totally committed. He promises to give us His grace and power to fulfill that commitment. He does not leave us helpless. Paul's prayer is applicable today that our "spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thessalonians 5:23). That is a prayer for wholeness. We need more than just our bodies healed. We need our spirits, our wills, our emotions, our intellects, and especially our subconscious minds to be made whole.

Being made whole helps us to walk in faithfulness in our relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When we are whole, we can better walk out our relationships with others as the Lord desires. Then, we can love and forgive others regardless of their attitudes toward us. Jesus commanded the questioning lawyer, "to love your neighbor as yourself". That implies loving yourself. Hating yourself has an adverse effect on the way and extent you love your neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39).

A husband, secretly unfaithful to his wife, became hypercritical of her and their children. He made the family so miserable counseling was necessary. When he confessed to God his sin of adultery and was forgiven, the burden of guilt fell off him. He was freed to be faithful and love his fine family. He no longer had to tear them down with criticism. He could praise God for His faithfulness in giving him peace.

In His Word God promises to be faithful, to do His part. What about doing our part? Because He gave you and me freedom of will, we can choose to be faithful to Him or not. We can be rebellious and reject His will for our lives. We can be double-minded, blowing hot and then cold, saying one thing and doing another. We can put idols on the throne of our lives, usurping our Lord's rightful place. Even though we may call Him Lord, we may be saying, "Lord, move over. Someone, or something, else is more important in my life."

We can try to escape from God's will through drugs or cigarettes or alcohol dependencies. Busyness crowds Him out of our priorities. We can let apathy divert us, putting off until tomorrow what needs to be done today. We can escape through fantasizing, living in a dream world of soap operas, movies, and TV shows. Yet, we are called to be faithful to carry out Jesus' commission to bring the kingdom of God in the real world.

Sarah was her own worst enemy. She was a woman addicted to soap operas. She neglected her homemaking. Her husband's lovemaking did not measure up to idols in her imaginary world. So, she became cold to him. In her VMTC prayer ministry session, she gave up her addictions, including her addiction to her imaginary world.

Then, the Lord showed Sarah how He could use her gift for meal preparation. Her church had Thursday noontime communion services. She planned a tasty and reasonably priced lunch for people returning to work afterward. Soon, husbands began to meet their wives for worship followed by the delicious meal. Other women joined her in this successful service project. Sarah's time and gifts led to a new outreach ministry for her church. She found joy in the reality of her newfound faithfulness.

God has called all of us to be His faithful sons and daughters in Christ Jesus. We can't be faithful without His help. Humanists want us to believe we can go it alone in the world without God's help.

We may try to walk faithfully in Jesus' Name and power in the world. Yet, our effectiveness is reduced when we are tainted by the world. If our values and priorities are as materialistic and self-seeking as those of the world, we Christians will be hampered in bearing the fruit the Lord wants. If our concern is what we can get from God, we are not following the Master who gave up His very life to save the world.

Satan wants us to replace Jesus-centeredness with man-centeredness. He tempts us to sit on God's throne and reject the cross. The devil's way is one of ambition, pride, and violence. This led to his fall (Isaiah 14:12-15 and Ezekiel 28:14-17). The closer we come to Jesus, the more eager Satan is to break up our loving relationship with Him and with others.

By manipulating people and circumstances, Satan tries to oppress us. He hopes we will succumb to his oppression and "curse God and die" (Job 2:9). The enemy tries to harass us as he did with Job. He tries to deceive us into hopelessness so we will give up and not be faithful. He desires to limit our receiving God's power to bring His kingdom into our hearts and lives. This is especially the case when serving Jesus in a ministry that sets Satan's captives free.

The truth is God is faithful. He is not going to desert us. We may grow weary and impatient and cry out “How long, Lord?” Yet, we are not forsaken. The answer may come in unexpected ways, perhaps ways we would not choose.

In His faithfulness, God promises to make a way of escape so we can endure (I Corinthians 10:13). The way of escape may be to forgive and love that difficult person. It may be to persistently pray through to ultimate victory, even when the enemy and some friends say the situation is hopeless. It may be to go on living in a crisis that seems interminable. Maybe it's to carry on a ministry and forgive others who back away, even though they have been blessed by it. The way of escape may be to go on rejoicing in the Lord's strength when our bodies are strained and our energies drained by the selfishness of those we expected to stand with us. The way of escape may come only through our own brokenness, even though the immediate cause is the sin of someone else for whom we pray.

“God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (I Corinthians 10:13b). This has recently become one of my favorite Scriptures. As I have lived it out in the laboratory of life, I have learned His Word does not fail!

In the fall of 1986, it was confirmed the time had come to sell my house in Winter Park, Florida. This meant moving our VMTC central office and workers from my home where it had been for over 17 years.

For a very long time, my name had been on a waiting list for a house in a lovely Christian retirement community. Total maintenance and maximum security would be provided, making it easier for me to travel in the Lord's work, especially with the office no longer in my home.

One day the phone rang. I learned my name was now at the top of the waiting list. Suddenly a house was available for me to accept or reject almost immediately! I had just put my house of 20 years on the market but real estate agents were dismayed by heavy traffic on the street immediately in back.

When the city widened that street, they put up huge signs: 25-mile speed limit. They were rarely enforced. The street became a noisy interstate connector. I had to repeatedly forgive the city for this hardship. What an injustice! I had to compete in a buyer's market with 12,000 Winter Park houses for sale. And here I paid very high city taxes!

When the street was widened 15 years before, the Lord guided me to offset this disadvantage with landscaping. At the same time, my husband Dick was convalescing from a second heart attack. I prayed for the guidance and strength to create a lovely, landscaped view from each window to benefit him. Mostly with my

own hands, I planted our half-acre of land with exotic, luxuriant shrubs, vines, and trees. The Lord guided me to combine plants so something different was in bloom each month of the year. That brought the outdoors into each window's view for Dick's enjoyment.

Last winter, I thanked God each day for the profusion of azaleas and camellias blossoming under the spreading arms of our huge, old oak trees. They were more beautiful than ever. Each time a freeze threatened I prayed for my heavily-laden orange tree to be protected. I remembered also those who had large groves with their livelihoods at stake.

By nine o'clock each day, my house had to be ready for prospective buyers. The buyers might have liked the landscaping. They did comment favorably on the excellent condition of my home's well-built, thick walls. No heavy traffic noise penetrated them. Yet, I watched repeated as prospective buyers lost interest when they viewed the office with four desks, a typewriter, a computer with two printers, and a storage closet full of books. I knew I needed a miracle to sell my 35-year old house quickly under such adverse conditions.

I went into intensive prayer. The Lord had me take a leap of faith and buy the new house, taking out a mortgage. By year's end, I was financially committed to two mortgages, two insurance premiums, two tax bills, and two heavy maintenance expenses.

With each step came overwhelming problems. As I threw myself continually on His grace for guidance and strength, He was faithful.

Just before Christmas, He led me to put my house on a for-sale-by-owner basis. There was an exciting flurry of interest while I was not traveling and could show the house. But in four weeks, I had to resume my schedule of speaking engagements. So, I listed my house with a real estate broker.

While traveling in California, the Lord gave me the clear words, "Your house has been sold." I came home fully expecting a couple who had been seriously interested were at last able to buy my house. To my chagrin, the broker said the deal to sell their townhouse in another city fell through. I was shattered. Satan nagged at me that I'd lost the Lord's guidance.

That same day, a couple who had seen the house at Christmas came to see it again! They even brought their relatives. We intensified our prayers on that crucial weekend. While praying with a long-time prayer partner and friend, the Lord clearly guided me to telephone this couple and offer to reduce the price. That brought my house into the range of another one they were almost ready to buy. A few days before, my son and a VMTC board member advised I would lose

appreciably by not reducing the price under the unusually unfavorable selling conditions. The Holy Spirit confirmed to me the wisdom of their advice.

Just before Christmas, God's faithfulness also provided tangible guidance through another friend. His corporation was sending VMTC a check for \$5,000.00 to pay for a year's office rental in a commercial location. This was a miracle. It was the largest single gift VMTC had ever received. That gift was my best material Christmas present. It released me from the burden of feeling I needed to sell my house at a price high enough to provide ministry office space. With the prayers of family and friends, our VMTC family, my rector and Bible study/prayer group, and with the much-needed help of my stalwart associate and my Christian attorney, the contract was signed.

Then, I had to forgive the buyers. They cut my already reduced price and delayed getting their loan for six interminable weeks while they held endless house inspections. God was faithful in carrying me through a war of nerves.

Satan's attempt to delay and defeat this whole process was almost ridiculous! My prayer partners and I prayed daily, sometimes several times a day, over each disappointing delay, over each major decision and each crucial challenge. We were in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy. We were constantly wielding the sword of the Spirit (the Word of God) and holding up the shield of faith. Satan was trying to break me down personally with constant harassment. I believe he wanted me to cancel schools, missions, and a retreat. The Lord had assured me all were important to Him.

I felt frustrated as I tried to balance the house sale and complicated move while flying to California, Georgia, Maine, or New Jersey or driving to South Florida for strenuous speaking engagements. Travel deadlines barely meshed with moving deadlines. Office work was just completed in time for VMTC commitments and our annual board of directors meeting. As I encountered frustration, I found comfort in knowing Paul also struggled against Satan's opposition: "because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us" (I Thessalonians 2:18).

During one of the heaviest days of spiritual warfare, the Lord gave me this prophecy: "You have cleared the decks for action for fuller service for me and I will use you in a new way my daughter, my beloved daughter. I will give you a new ministry through a new book and I will open new doors for you and your life will become more effective for me."

The Lord was faithful! He carried me through the most horrendous of the twenty-one moves I had made, including those to Japan and England years ago. Never before had I moved while going to and from the airport.

My associate Don was a great help. He moved the office to our new location the same weekend I moved most of my belongings to the new house. He was barely home from a trip the day the movers arrived early to move my heavy furniture to the new address. Weeks before I moved out many household items, most of my clothes, the rugs, and the lighter pieces. The Lord was faithful in giving Don the wisdom and physical strength to help me in this strenuous job. Good weather was another miracle.

Daily, I shared the burdens in prayer with faithful intercessors, especially when Satan used inefficient workmen and senseless delays to make the move more difficult. Daily and hourly, I had to depend on, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13). Daily and hourly, I had to keep submitting myself and the many frustrating complications to God, forgiving others, and resisting the devil. I knew if I did this, my persistent enemy would eventually have to flee (James 4:7). Even those helping me move were under attack in this spiritual warfare. Yet, as we continued in prayer to claim the Lord's victory and press on by faith, each round was won.

God is faithful. He overcomes what Satan intends for evil with good. At the same time, He expects us to wield the "weapons that are divinely powerful" (2 Corinthians 10:4). We are to persevere in His power when our hearts and bodies would otherwise fail under the pressure of the evil one's opposition and harassment. Satan's strategy is to prevent us from fulfilling God's purposes for our lives. While Jesus has already won the victory, we have to live it out daily by His grace. I confirm what Paul wrote: "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from evil" (2 Thessalonians 3:1-3).

Now, we work in our new and larger commercial office, and I rejoice in the beauty, peace, security, and comfort of my new home. My heart rejoices over the many unexpected blessings He has provided in this new chapter of my life. No wonder Satan tried so persistently to rob me of this victory. Where God guides, He provides and more beautifully and abundantly than I had ever expected. Daily He continues to say, "Follow Me." I continue to praise God. He is faithful.

FIVE

Trust in the Lord

Belief is more than intellectual assent. Believing Jesus is divine, the Son of God, is not the same as believing in Him. When we believe in Him, we put our trust in Him. We stake our lives on His reality. The early Christian martyrs did so when they went to their deaths singing hymns of joy. I can believe Jesus performed many miracles during His earthly ministry and still does them today through His body, the Church. That is not the same as believing in Jesus' power to heal me at this moment of need.

How often people ask, "Why is it harder for me to have faith for myself than to pray for others?" When you and I have the pain, it takes a deeper sense of trust in the Lord to replace that insistent ache or fear or discomfort. How, then, will we grow this trust in Jesus? How will we not be faint-hearted when crises arise? How can we hold fast and trust in Jesus when Satan attacks us? When we are assailed by doubts? When the doctors give us no hope?

One way is to saturate ourselves with the Bible, the Word of God. As we read or listen to Scripture, God reveals Himself. He promises His Word "will not return to Him empty or void" (Isaiah 55:11). Often, as we read the Bible, the Lord gives us His "rhema" word. A rhema word is His specific word for us for a particular situation. It may be a phrase, a verse, or a chapter. The Holy Spirit confirms this word in our hearts. We know it is for us.

Sometimes, the rhema word lies dormant before we need to use it. Sometimes it becomes a steady refrain in our hearts. Sometimes, we need to live it out in the laboratory of life, acting out our faith, to see its significance. We stand firmly by faith to begin acting upon the Word: "Take delight in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" (Psalms 37:4).

We need to be sure the desires of our hearts are suitable to be accepted by God. It is not "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) to use Scripture faith promises to try to force God to do for us other than His will. In many teachings today the word "presumption" is more accurate than the word "faith". The Scriptures are lined up to coerce God, to make Him do our will. Rather, we should align ourselves with His will as in Jesus' clear teachings and the witness of His life. Jesus said He came to do the will of His Father, which included Calvary.

Some claim faith-formula teaching makes human suffering unnecessary. They claim a new, higher revelation not bound by the Word of God. This is a dangerous form of charismatic humanism. In promoting the prosperity gospel they claim the same fancy clothes, fine cars, and extravagant houses the humanists claim.

Isn't it odd Jesus was so out of touch with this higher revelation? He rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey. Isn't it odd many New Testament Scriptures warn true believers of sufferings they would endure? Apparently, Paul and Peter did not have this new revelation either. Nor did Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who wrote in *The Cost of Discipleship*: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die" (p. 7). Obviously, Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was really out of touch with this higher revelation claiming suffering no longer necessary.

According to this aberrational teaching, such Scriptures as Romans 8:15b-17 and II Timothy 3:12-13 are ridiculously out of date today. The promise Paul makes is: "When we cry 'Abba! Father!' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him" (Romans 8:15b-17). In writing to Timothy, Paul said bluntly: "Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil men and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived" (II Timothy 3:12-13).

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). A more modern definition might be, "Faith is living within the conditions of the answered prayer." Faith in Jesus involves trusting Him who is totally trustworthy.

When people reject us or let us down, it may be helpful to remember Jesus is the only One we can totally trust. He is God incarnate, alive in us. A six-year-old explained to a little friend, "Jesus is God come to visit us." In Psalm 37:5-6 we read: "Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him, and he will act. He will bring forth your vindication as the light and your right as the noonday." Too often we try to bring forth our own selfish vindication, usually making the problem worse, instead of trusting the solution to the Lord.

We also grow in trust by being obedient to Him in many little situations. Then, when crises come, we will be more confident in trusting Him. It is like making deposits of money into a bank account. In times of financial need, we know we can access that money. It is the same with our spiritual lives.

God desires our moment-by-moment trust in Him. Often we run ahead of Him to solve our problems. We do not wait patiently on Him. When we trust in

Him, He will make a way where there is no way. Our fretting and anxiety only hold back His solution.

The Psalms warn us not to trust in wealth (52:5-7 and 62:5-10) or in leaders (146:3) but rather in God's Name (33:21) and in His Word (119:42). We are also told by Jeremiah not to trust in man (17:5) or in works (1:16 and 48:7). Paul reminds us in many places, as well as in Ephesians, we are not to trust in our own righteousness (2:4-9).

We are encouraged in many of the Psalms to accept the goodness and lovingkindness of God (31:19, 32:10). Benefits are promised us: deliverance (22:4-5), blessedness (32:1-2), and provision (37:3-5). In times of trial by fire, those in danger or persecution can find helpful guidance in Psalm 56:1-4 or Proverbs 3:5-6. Our God is faithful, but we need to saturate ourselves in these and other Scriptures. They help counteract the lies of Satan. He uses discouragement and doubt to try to lower our level of faith.

Through continual practice, we learn to know and trust the voice of the Master, just as sheep learn to know and trust the voice of their shepherd. With the many conflicting, clamoring, insistent voices in today's world, it is especially important to know the voice of our Good Shepherd. If a seeming solution is contrary to the Word of God, it cannot be the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Jesus will not contradict His Word.

As a basis, three Scriptures confirming each other are needed, not just one isolated Scripture we would like to think confirms our plans. The whole counsel of God needs to be taken into account when seeking guidance. In seeking guidance from the Lord, the gifts of discerning of spirits, wisdom, and knowledge, used with the gift of faith, are much needed.

Too many people fail to pray things through. Instead, they jump to an unwise conclusion quickly and then repent at leisure. When God calls us to do something, we need to continue to trust Him to bring about the fulfillment of His purpose in His timing.

Too often we have a desire for a quick-fix in today's world. Many want instant everything, but God does not always work on our time-tables. Sometimes He seems exasperatingly slow when we are weak in our trust. As we grow the fruit of patience, we come to realize His timing is right.

A pastor's wife shared with me a prophecy that was not fulfilled until nine years later. God prophetically revealed to her, "I have a people called by my Name. These you shall lead into green pastures of worship and I shall cause the growth." Today, her beautiful music ministry is a fulfillment of this prophecy. God had His timing.

Usually, in seeking guidance we need to get a rhema word, a specific word, from the Lord and confirm it with a wise counselor before we take a leap of faith. We certainly need to check if what we have in mind is scriptural and is really in the Name (nature) of Jesus, not just in line with our selfish nature. If our proposed plan of action is self-exalting, vindictive, or motivated by escapism, it is not of the Lord, even though some circumstances point in that direction.

Sometimes He guides us to walk in tough love. Tough love is being loving even when it is difficult. It usually means wanting the highest good for the other person. When in doubt, it may be best not to do, say or write anything until the Lord clarifies His will. A time will come when the light turns green. Proceed cautiously in faith, praying for the Lord's confirmation through His peace in our hearts. Trust His wisdom and strength to carry us through to victory. Sometimes He moves swiftly at the very last minute!

What tools does Satan use to try to rob us of trusting the Lord? Doubt and unbelief. Satan does not want us to trust the Lord "and in the strength of His might" (Ephesians 6:10). In Psalms 37:7, we read David's advice: "Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not yourself over him who prospers in his way, over the man who carries out evil devices." Being patient is difficult, especially when evil is prospering. When we see wrongdoers prosper, our envy is often clothed in self-righteousness. We forget they may have material benefits but not the true prosperity of heart peace with God.

We will be the losers if we let envy, anger, or fretfulness break a hole in our hedge of protection. Satan will take advantage of these reactions to make us lose this inner peace God has promised us when we are centered in His will. "Thou dost keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusts in thee. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock" (Isaiah 26:3-4). What a wonderful legacy we have in these words!

Will this Rock move away from us? No. Sometimes we move away from Him! We let our minds stray away from Him and His will. Then, we need to return to Him with repentant hearts. We can trust His Word that God always forgives our confessed sins and remembers them no more (Hebrews 8:12). One modern translation says: "roll and repose [each care of] your load on Him . . . and He will bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:5). We often fail to "roll" the problems over to the Lord. More often, we do not "repose" them there. Instead, we take them back from the Lord and try to solve them ourselves.

When I left the Orlando airport for Karachi, I was told I did not need a Pakistan visa on my passport. After a refreshing overnight in Frankfurt, Germany, I dragged my bags up to the Pan Am desk to check in on the noon flight to Karachi.

There I was told something quite different: I could not board because I had no Pakistan visa on my passport. At midnight, the Pakistani government just dropped the ban. No amount of reasoning would persuade the ticket agent. As I prayed for divine wisdom, I recalled my late husband telling me: “When in trouble, ask to speak to the top man.” So I did: the Lord, Himself.

I was guided to ask to speak to the Pan Am supervisor in Frankfurt. When he finally came to the desk, I heard myself asking him: “What would you do if I were your relative?” Somewhat taken aback, he finally agreed to call the Pakistani consulate in Bonn, Germany. After much discussion, he informed me I needed to travel two hours by train to Bonn to get the necessary passport visa. The plane I wanted to board was leaving in a half-hour!

While praying in the Spirit, I realized I felt rooted to the spot as I had no German money, no contacts, and no place to stay in Bonn. The next plane to Karachi would not leave until three days later. I would miss the retreat I was supposed to lead. I would be unable to rendezvous with our VMTC director and co-leader as planned. He was on the plane waiting for me to board this suddenly verboten flight.

Quietly within me, I heard the still, small voice of God: “Go in faith, nothing doubting.” It was so faint that I said: “Lord, please turn up the volume! I have to know at this instant what I’m to do and only You can make this decision for me!” Again, I heard the exact same words—a little clearer, but nothing more!

Suddenly I heard myself saying to the supervisor: “I’ll take the chance of being deported on the next flight from Karachi if the Pakistani government will not let me stay for fourteen days without a passport visa. But please let me board this plane and join my colleague. I can’t go to Bonn. If I did, it would be too late for my engagement.” He finally agreed to take my luggage on that flight, provided I took full personal responsibility. This meant that if I were deported from Karachi, I would waste my \$2,300.00 plane ticket and would miss my speaking engagement. I asked the Lord to give me a third confirmation. The same words came very clearly: “Go in faith, nothing doubting.”

On the plane, at last, I was overjoyed to pray with our VMTC Board Member, Father Al, about this crucial decision. Then the Holy Spirit through him confirmed my guidance as he said: “I think it’s going to be all right when we get to Karachi. The Lord is going to work a miracle.” We praised the Lord. On the long flight, we worked over the many detailed plans for the VMTC retreat and school. We felt the Lord’s leading to give him the elaborate scheduling sheets and the teaching outlines, just in case. (I have learned from long years of experience in constant spiritual warfare that when Satan finds he cannot upset things, he usually calls off the attack.)

We left the plane in Karachi and proceeded to the passport control desk. An American businessman in line ahead of us was overjoyed to find Al lived very near him in New Jersey. When the Pakistani agent asked for his passport visa, the excited businessman burred something senseless which confused the situation. The Lord used this distraction in an amazing way. In the confusion, one of the passport desk personnel suddenly reached out, grabbed my passport, stamped it "14 days," without the required visa, and waved me through to safety.

Praise the Lord! I could have been locked up in the airport detention jail and deported on the next flight to Frankfurt three days later. I would have forfeited my expensive ticket and altogether missed the purpose of my trip. Trust in the Lord! His ways are wonderful to work miracles in our lives. Trust and rejoice.

Praise Changes Us

Praise comes naturally to us when we are walking in the Spirit of the Lord because our spirits are created to respond to the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures tell us God inhabits the praises of Israel (Psalm 22:3). If we want to be in Christ, we will discover praise is necessary. “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise” (Psalm 100:4).

To reach the inner courts of praise we travel through the outer gates of thanksgiving. We thank God for what He has done for us, for what He is doing now, and for what He will do in the future as we continue to trust in Him. But we praise God for who He is, regardless of whether or not He is answering our prayers the way we want. Praise and adoration are always the highest forms of prayer.

When disaster struck, a friend was tempted to blame God, not praise Him. Her daughter’s fine plantation home burned to the foundation one morning. All their furnishings and clothes were destroyed. Then, she realized how thankful she was because their lives were spared. Had the fire occurred at night, they would have been drugged by smoke as they slept upstairs. She began to praise God for His mercy. Their friends rallied to their need wonderfully, showing their love in many tangible ways. The Lord blessed them with an even more beautiful house. He not only saved their lives but restored their home. Praise God!

When we yield ourselves to praise our Heavenly Father, we are joining with the whole company of heaven. Praise changes things. Perhaps even better, praise changes us!

When we praise God during difficult days, we are making “a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name” (Hebrews 13:15). Even when we do not feel like praising God, we can praise as an offering of obedience to Him, an act of our will.

A friend was praying for her seriously ill mother. As the doctor’s diagnosis was alarming for one of her age, it was easy to worry. My friend prayed to know how to pray. The Lord gave her the inner conviction to relinquish her mother to Him and then just continue to praise Him. Within a few days, much to the doctor’s amazement, her mother was totally healed. Her praise bore fruit.

In the midst of crises we, too, can praise Him. Our praise acknowledges He is greater than the pain and grief of our circumstances. We can trust God to see His fruit in our lives.

In her early nineties, my mother fell and suffered a broken hip. The doctor said she could not survive the excruciating pain unless she had a hip operation. He warned the operation might be unsuccessful. Mama assured him she was a Christian and not afraid to die. She said she did not want to linger on if she could not get well.

Unfortunately, she never really recovered from the operation and was being kept alive with a catheter, IV feeding, and other artificial life-support measures. To my grief, she was not mentally right after the operation. She was what she did not want to be: a vegetable propped up in a wheelchair. Talk with her doctor was frustrating. He could offer nothing more for the future. My mother, who had been a dynamic person, would recoil from being in such a helpless state.

Some years before, she lost her faith, wandering into Christian Science and other cultish teachings. Praise God, she returned to her faith in Jesus through the ministry of her young Episcopal priest. He also anointed her with oil for healing of her sight. (See *Healing Adventure*, Anne S. White, Logos, p. 66; Sovereign World, Ltd., p. 61). After that, living in an excellent nursing home, she was a faithful intercessor for other patients and was loved by all the nurses.

Now, she was ready to meet her Master. But medical science was forcing on her a degrading, dependent existence. In despair, I went with a close friend to the Wednesday morning communion service at our church. I hardly knew how to pray. I told the Lord if He wanted her to come home to take her.

As I knelt at the altar rail, I forgave the doctor. I felt he had gone back on his promises to her. I repented of my anger toward him. Then, I relinquished my mother to the Lord and began to praise Him for His answer to my prayers.

I arrived at the nursing home an hour later. Just a few minutes before, my mother had breathed her last breath. She was safe in the presence of Jesus, already joining the whole company of heaven and praising God at His throne of grace! My husband said to the nurses, "After a long and fruitful life, she has at last gone home to the Lord." Her funeral service was a joyous graduation service. "The strife is o'er, the battle done; the victory of life is won...Alleluia!" Praise God!

Praise affects spiritual warfare. Praise during spiritual warfare causes the Lord's resurrection power to work more effectively in us and through us.

Sometimes we encounter spiritual warfare when registrations are slow for a VMTC prayer ministry school. Then, more warfare. A couple calls and cancels

their reservations. Problems have come up with illnesses, babysitter problems, or finances. Making us aware of a spiritual battle is going on, the Lord usually guides us to pray for them on the telephone and claim the victory of Calvary. We hang up the phone and continue to praise God the situation is in His hands. We thank Him in advance for the victory. And, we see victories!

In one case, a wife called unexpectedly to cancel their registration. When I asked her why she was unconvincing. I knew this couple belonged in the school and were unaware they were in spiritual warfare. I prayed with her on the phone against a spirit of confusion and asked her to pray with her husband that night. Our office continued to praise God for His guidance and protection.

The next morning she called excitedly to say the confusion had cleared away. They were coming to the school.

In other cases, we have prayed with couples by taking authority over the spirit of infirmity attacking their sick child. We continued to praise God. In one case, the husband called the very next day to report the child well again. Praise the Lord!

During difficult stretches, praising God is not always easy. At those times, we make a sacrifice of praise, an act of our wills, regardless of our feelings. As we have elected to follow Jesus, Satan will try to prevent us from praising God. In difficult situations, he will tell us the situation is hopeless. He will use his chief weapons—deceit, doubt, discouragement, and depression. We may not know how to combat Satan's weapons. During those times, it helps to pray in the Spirit using our prayer language.

Praying in tongues often helps energize the other gifts of the Spirit. Then, we can better hear the word of wisdom or knowledge God has for that situation. Those who downgrade the gift of tongues do not realize its usefulness; "for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words" (Romans 8:26).

The author of Hebrews says we are continually to praise God. The reference may be to this gift of tongues. We can pray in our prayer language continually while using our intellect to drive our car. Praying in the intellect continually with words we understand would be difficult. The letter to the Hebrews tells us to "continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge His name" (13:15). Tongues help us do that.

Frequently, Satan uses accusations to distract us from praising God. He is called "the accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10). He first deceives us through attractive temptations so we will fall into his trap of sinful thoughts,

words, or deeds. Once we have sinned, Satan accuses us and tells us we are hopeless and helpless and God will never forgive us. Satan will even misquote Scripture to further his ends. He uses a pincer method on us: one side is deceit and the other is nagging condemnation. He does not want us to praise the Lord.

How do we protect ourselves from the enemy's tactics? Daily enter His Presence with thanksgiving and spend time praising Him, not dumping petitions on Him. Make a fresh, joyous commitment to Him. Seek in His word the message He has for that day. Then, praise Him for His message.

When we begin each day in an attitude of praise, we can, in faith, expect His miracles throughout the day and be better prepared for Satan's unexpected attacks. We also need the protection of the whole armor of God, especially the breastplate of righteousness. (See Ephesians 6:13-17 and Chapter II in *Trial by Fire*, by Anne S. White.)

The spirit of praise can be quenched in us when we succumb to the enemy's false accusations. If we fall under condemnation, ask the Holy Spirit to convict of any hidden sin. Sometimes God's still, small voice reveals resentment, fear, or some pride in our hearts—something to be confessed as sin. If so, we need to confess, repent, and ask God for His forgiveness.

Claim the blessing of forgiveness instantly, standing on the promise of 1 John 1:9. The Word tells us here and in other places that God forgives our sins as soon as we repent and confess them to Him. After that, the enemy has no legal right to accuse us. Then, began to thank Him and praise Him for His forgiveness and being faithful and true.

When God forgives us, Hebrews 8:12 tells us He remembers our sins no more. Who are we to carry a load of guilt any longer? Tell the accuser to leave, standing on the promise of Romans 8:1: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Immediately turn to praise God for His loving mercy and for removing those sins "as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12). Praise God!

As Christians, we can always praise God for making salvation a reality. Praise Him for the victory of His Son, Jesus, at Calvary. Praise Him for His Holy Spirit's deliverance from fear and self-pity, from bitterness and defeatism. Praise Him for being able to praise Him all through the day! Hallelujah!

Praise is so vital to us in our Christian walk. We exercise our faith when we praise God in the midst of our difficulties. This helps to crucify the flesh's nature to wallow in self-pity. Praising God when circumstances are going awry helps to clear

us to receive His guidance for the solution to the problems. Praising God quenches idolatry when we humans are apt to exalt the person or the ministry. Most certainly, when we are praising God, He supplies strength to follow His guidance...

At a Karachi Clergy School of Prayer Ministry, we had unusually heavy attacks by the enemy. Our international team members coming from Australia and Finland were affected by sudden passport visa problems and by the midnight hijacking of a Pan Am plane at the Karachi Airport as it flew in from India! As mentioned in the last chapter, by God's miracle, Father Al and I had arrived from our harried flight about midnight on Monday. We were leading a Thursday-to-Saturday weekend retreat with the bishop and his local team. With no telephone communication anywhere that week, we did not even know of the terrible catastrophe hijacking until two days afterward. Then, Paivi, the bishop's wife, brought to the retreat center two Australians who had arrived safely. They left the airport a few minutes before the cruel hijacking disaster began. Paivi was still ashen-faced as she told us the tragic story.

Suddenly, the Lord showed me I would have been involved had He not rescued me miraculously. I would either have been boarding that hijacked plane (if the Pakistanis had put me in jail and deported me); or, had I gone to Bonn, Germany, to get a visa (as the airlines had wanted me to do), I would have been in the bloody shooting at the Karachi airport as I was disembarking from the Pan Am flight from Frankfurt. That plane always crosses in Karachi with the westbound flight from India, the one so brutally hijacked. I began to praise the Lord for His merciful guidance and protection, spending my free time that afternoon in praying for the many injured and the families of all those killed. I was so thankful to my God for protecting me.

Because of great oppression by the enemy in that Muslim country, we simply had to keep on praising the Lord in that school. Dysentery hit us all at different times. We praised. He healed each of us in time for our next assignment.

Since the Finns and Australians had also arrived without visas, they had to make unforeseen, inconvenient visits to Pakistani passport authorities. We kept on praising the Lord. Nothing else could be done with so much confusion under this heavy satanic attack. Amid shouts of joy, they arrived back at the center the exact moment they were needed to start the five-hour prayer ministry appointments. Had they not been able to, our school's closely-meshed schedule would have been disastrously disarrayed. Praise changed these situations and changed us.

Inadequate food, vicious mosquitoes, a sultry heat, brushing our teeth in a cup of boiled water, cold showers, no telephone contact when badly needed—none

of these adverse conditions daunted our praise of God. He brought all of us through safely. He empowered us to lead the most effective retreat and school we have ever had.

God did that in the Christian Monastery of the Angels, in the center of a Muslim city during an Islamic religious festival, with deafening night and day broadcasts claiming allegiance to Allah. We prayed in the Spirit almost constantly—the last thing at night and the first thing in the morning, as well as throughout those eleven pressured days. We praised our God, the true God revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the creator and sustainer, who is worthy to be praised! He gave us the victory! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

Termites in the House of Life

In many parts of the world, termites are a dreaded danger. Like a silent army, they attack the wooden structure of a house and even its furniture. Outward appearance may not reveal the damage done secretly. When an infestation of termites is discovered, a house must be sealed by professional exterminators in an enormous plastic covering. Poison is applied to penetrate thoroughly every piece of wood to destroy these wood-eating insects and their larvae. Periodic checks ensure no recurrence. It is most unlikely anyone would ever buy a house unless inspected and guaranteed termite-free.

What about termites breeding in the house of life? Like those eating away and destroying wood, we find spiritual termites eating away at relationships to destroy them. Fears creeping into a child's heart can be hidden until exposed years later as damaging to a relationship.

As a tiny girl, a friend was on a pier and leaned over to reach for a little basket on the ocean bottom. Losing her balance, she frantically splashed into the water. As she came up gasping for breath, people laughed at her, but no one rushed to rescue her. Fear of drowning gripped her heart. When finally she was hauled out of the water, what others considered funny became a nightmare for her. Because it is natural to repress unpleasant events, she totally forgot this incident.

Fifty years later when her husband decided to take up sailing as his special hobby, she panicked. Her fear of water intensified as she faced the thought of trusting herself to the hazards of sailing. Even her love for her husband and her desire to share his new hobby could not overcome the gripping fear of water. Whenever she stepped aboard his glistening white sailboat, she felt it.

Her husband was beginning to get impatient with her excuses and reluctance to join him in his favorite pastime. For a competent, mature Christian woman to be so terrified seemed silly. Worst of all, he would soon retire so sailing would be a daily problem.

When she came for prayer ministry, we asked the Lord to show her the hidden cause of her fears and to set her free from the bondage to this unknown root. In the love of Jesus, she unexpectedly relived the terrifying incident. Then,

she experienced His healing of the devastating fear holding her in bondage. The spiritual termite was gone. She was totally set free by the perfect love of Jesus that casts out fear. Now, she crews for her husband on exciting boat trips. Both are delighted! Praise God!

Perhaps even more serious are the fears of disease that often stem from the illness of a parent or of another child during the early years of life. As we discussed the physical effect of buried emotions such as resentment, self-pity, and fear, a Christian doctor remarked, “To fear cancer is the best way to get it.”

Fear of poverty can often warp the life of those who grew up in a home during the depression. They cannot enjoy spending in a normal way, even though money is not a problem for them today. Unnatural bondage to money exists.

Fear of sexual molestation is a horrible curse on the life of a child. The child may be forced to live in a home where a stepfather or uncle threatens harm if the dreadful secret is revealed.

Fear of rejection because of some early failure to please a harshly exacting parent can become more crippling. Other rejections can latch onto it later in life, contributing to further painful relationships.

All these fears are spiritual termites. These hidden devourers eat away at relationships secretly, causing *dis*-ease. Often, they are aggravated over the years by the subconscious minds of the ones who have repressed them—or even deliberately suppressed them.

“Out of sight, out of mind” is a slogan that is not true. Thoughts held in the subconscious mind have a powerful effect on the autonomic nervous system. A person who has had a death wish for many years can become accident-prone or develop some rare disease. Other fears buried for years can still affect a person’s relationships today: fear of confrontation, fear of height, fear of the dark, fear of death. The fear generated by a violent horror story seen by a child on TV or in a movie can cause serious spiritual, mental, and physical repercussions years later. All of these can be healed by the powerful love of Jesus. He can heal the results of the past because He is “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Anger is another serious spiritual termite. Often the person cannot recall the cause of the problem harbored for years, a secret poison eating away at the heart. A young man suffered sporadic attacks of nausea and headaches. He came to me for VMTC Prayer Ministry because the attacks were becoming more frequent, seriously hampering his work and family life. The Lord gave me a word of

knowledge that the cause was anger against his mother. He was astounded because he had not been aware of this repressed emotion.

The Holy Spirit revealed the beginning of these symptoms. When he was a boy of 13, his mother left him alone in the hospital because of the critical illness of another child. Intellectually, he accepted her need to be away from him. Emotionally, he experienced severe feelings of rejection and anger. Because it was not acceptable to show anger, it became deeply repressed. The Holy Spirit brought the whole experience to light. He was healed as we prayed in thanksgiving for Jesus' release of his body, mind, and spirit from this crippling past relationship. Of course, he had to forgive his mother. The Holy Spirit can reveal the buried spiritual termite in order to heal him.

Self-pity is often characterized by a grumbling or murmuring habit. The Israelites were guilty of this sin after God had delivered them from bondage in Egypt. They complained about the manna and the quail instead of praising God for His deliverance from former cruel taskmasters. The complainers could not enter the Promised Land. They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until that generation of complainers died.

Are we grouching about our everyday circumstances instead of praising God? Do we let problems outweigh the blessings in our lives? The more we wallow in self-pity, the greater the problems will become—until we see our need to praise God in all situations or circumstances. Self-pity increases the load we carry. It keeps us from seeing how God can overcome with good what Satan intends for evil.

Rejection is another greedy termite in the house of life. If we are sure we are going to be rejected by someone, we can become very sensitive in a self-centered way, suspicious of all the person does. Carrying a chip on our shoulders only encourages someone to knock it off. Those who carry rejection from early childhood accumulate more rejections as they grow up. They may have been told or overheard, they were not wanted, that it was an economic burden for the parents or they had wanted a boy instead of a girl.

Secretly, and often unconsciously, such a person internally will be set up to fail and accumulate more rejection. As this process continues from the formative years into adulthood, the person continues to both expect and fear rejection. Being the spouse of such a person is hard. All too often one with a lifestyle of rejection will not accept love from others. To accept love would destroy the pattern of self-pity which has become comfortable.

One serious rejection in childhood can begin a damaging habit of accepting rejection when not intended. Each fresh rejection brings more loneliness until the

love of Jesus can be brought to bear on the person's life.

Many people are not in touch with past rejection experiences because of being made to feel like a nonperson. Having repressed so many painful emotions, they become loners and feel a depressive attitude even when things go well.

The buried cause of rejection may be a father punishing his child too harshly or for something not done. A mother might have nagged continually, never showing love and approval when the child had done his best to please. To succeed in sports or school and not receive needed approval from parents is a rejection that may lie dormant for years.

In a household where discipline is too harsh, a child can develop destructive habits of blaming others, making excuses, or lying to escape facing the pain of admitting failure. If accepted by parents, the child learns to not take responsibility for his or her own actions. This breed of termites ultimately makes the person more careless and forgetful. He has learned to get away with shifting the blame instead of facing failure and learning to overcome it in his daily relationships.

The loving acceptance of two trained prayer ministers can help the rejected person mature. The perfect love of Jesus flows through them as an antidote to years of repressed rejection, inadequacy, and fear of failure. These spiritual termites breed others such as rebellion, anger, even identity confusion.

When a child is brought up in a truly Christian home, such feelings can be discussed and prayed for when they occur. The love and acceptance of wise Christian parents can help insulate the child from potential wounds of the spirit inflicted by others. In such instances, Christian parents can teach their children a valuable lesson of forgiveness.

The termites of rebellion, rejection, fear, and anger can be seen in the following story:

“As a child growing up in a pastor's family, I was the last of four siblings. Even before I entered school, my father was a working pastor. He preached to a small congregation on Sunday and worked at a gas station for the rest of the week. That left little time to spend with me. My oldest brother, who is eleven years older than me, had the responsibility to watch over me. He became a father image to me. I must have idolized him because when he got married at the age of nineteen, it really hurt me he was leaving our household. I began looking for the acceptance of my peers. I thought I needed to prove to others I was normal. All through high school I tried to drink and smoke more than anyone else. I would go to dances,

rebellious against my father's will. To build up the nerve to ask a girl to dance, I would get drunk. Being drunk caused girls to be repulsed by me, so I drank more to escape the rejection. Before I graduated from high school, I moved out of my father's house. I was too rebellious to live by his rules.

"While attending junior college I met the lady who would one day become my wife. A year and a half later, I was drafted into the army. I told her I didn't want to be engaged to her because I didn't want her to feel obligated to me if I came back only part of a man.

"My experience in Vietnam was terrifying. I was a foot soldier, which means you carry everything on your back while splashing and stumbling over hill and through the jungle in search of the enemy. You never knew but that you would be killed next. Whenever we got back to a firebase, we would try to escape from reality by doing drugs. The mood was one of fatalism. I simply lived for the now and whatever pleasure through which I could escape from life.

"After spending my time in Vietnam, I came home looking pretty much the same on the outside. Inside, I was a powder keg. Very soon after coming home, we married. My new wife learned how different I was. I would vacillate from a weeping, insecure, childish person to an angry, overbearing tyrant. I abused her verbally and even physically at times.

"Nine months after we were married, we both recommitted our lives to Jesus. That made things better for a while. However, I still felt a rage inside whenever someone made comments like, 'The real heroes are those who ran away to Canada'. I was angry at officers in command, the Vietnamese who didn't accept us GIs and all the people back home who didn't care or were even skeptical about it all. I watched the news as the last Marine left the United States embassy. I could not help but ask myself, 'Why did I risk my life over there?' Any chance I got, I poured out my wrath on anyone near, especially my wife and family.

"After five years of marriage, I noticed the beginnings of a physical problem. I was retaining liquids which caused my legs to swell. My condition continued to get worse. Finally, after almost a whole year, I went to see a doctor. He immediately put me in the hospital. I was told that my kidneys were failing. I was put on medication and a special diet. The doctor said, at best, we could hold it in check. There was also the possibility I would need a kidney transplant.

“During the two weeks in the hospital, I had a visit from a friend. He told me the Lord wanted to heal me inside as well as healing me physically. That next December, I attended my first VMTC Clergy School of Prayer Ministry. I didn’t think I needed any help, but I wanted to learn to help others. The next month after going to that school, I had the last appointment with my kidney specialist. I’m no longer on medication and I’m certainly not on any diet.

“Things began to improve, but I still had a problem with being rebellious to authority. I had been working at the post office for almost ten years when, because of my rebellion, I managed to get fired. For six weeks I had no job to go to. That gave me plenty of time to talk to God.

“Because I had learned the importance of confession of sins through VMTC Prayer Ministry, I knew what to pray about. Because of my confession and God’s forgiveness, I’m convinced He not only gave me back my job, but He added another blessing. I now have a special job as a training manager.

“I have learned to communicate and problem-solve by working together with those under me. God has allowed me to help problem employees learn to cooperate and work together. I now get the privilege of praying for people in offices for miles around as I meet with them weekly.

“There is no doubt in my mind God had to heal me first to use me this way. Praise the Lord, for His mercy endures forever!”

When a person is willing to let the penetrating light of the Holy Spirit reveal root causes, the Lord can and does cleanse with His Blood and heal with His love. Usually, the person has to see the sin of letting these spiritual termites take over, even affecting his children.

Jesus can exterminate spiritual termites. The power of His Holy Spirit replaces the power Satan has had because of repressed, damaged emotions. When a person is willing to look honestly at areas of need and victimization, confess his or her own sins, repent, and accept the love of Jesus to heal and make whole, He does. What Jesus did at Calvary is truly effective for the healing of those who accept Him—not just as Savior and Healer but as Lord and Master! A new lifestyle of walking in the Spirit is necessary to maintain the Victory won over these spiritual termites.

Forgiveness is a Beauty Treatment

The old Adam lives in the unbeliever who has not accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. Without Jesus, the unbeliever does not experience God's forgiveness. Unless people die to self and accept the reality of Jesus' power to save them from their sins, they can be part of a church and not be aware their commitment is to an institution, not to Jesus. Paul, in writing to the Roman church, said: "You also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus" (6:11).

Our salvation is in Jesus, not in some particular ritual, counselor, or popular preacher. Jesus is the one who brings us into right relationship with God our Father. We come alive in Him and come out of the deadness of fears, bitterness, pride, rebellion, rejection, grief, lusts, or abuses of our bodies. When we repent of these sins with a broken and contrite heart, God forgives our sins, and the Blood of Jesus, our Savior, cleanses us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).

The adversary, the accuser, tries to convince us we are not forgiven. But God's Word says He removes our sins as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12) and God "remembers our sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

If God forgives us when we repent and confess our sins, which Scripture assures us he does, who are we not to forgive ourselves? If we say: "God may forgive me, but I cannot forgive myself," we are guilty of the sin of pride. We then need to confess the sin of pride also.

One man of 70 had been a church member since he was a boy. As a teenager, he committed a sin he felt was unforgivable. He continued to go to church but had no peace in his heart. He was so hard to get along with and critical of others he had few friends. He seldom smiled and seemed to find little joy in life.

When I was speaking in his church, he came to a Saturday morning workshop. He insisted on sitting alone on the back row, seemingly not listening. As his action interested me, I kept track of him as I spoke.

As I explained God's forgiveness, this older man suddenly began to listen

with interest. Unexpectedly, he called out, "Sister, do you mean God would forgive a sin no matter how long ago it was committed?" I replied confidently, quoting the previously mentioned Scriptures, Psalm 103:12 and Hebrews 8:12.

Suddenly his face broke into a broad smile as he shouted "Hallelujah." Immediately he looked twenty years younger! Talk about forgiveness as a beauty treatment! The burden of his guilt was rolled away. Praise God!

Many people carry heavy burdens of guilt which warp their relationship with God, with others and with themselves. When we feel guilty, we often try to ease the burden by finger-pointing at someone else. Feeling we are better than someone else, we can rationalize away our guilt.

Unless they are practicing Christians, psychiatrists usually explain away guilt by saying "Well, everyone else is doing it." The humanists say, "If it feels good, do it." No amount of rationalization, self-justification, or shifting the blame to someone else will replace sincere confession of sin.

If we have difficulty in quieting our consciences without outside help, confession to God can be made in the presence of a pastor or trained lay minister. That person will be able to claim God's word with authority, whether it is called absolution or assurance of pardon (James 5:15-16). Having a witness to our confession is both scriptural and helpful in case Satan later tries to accuse us. Then, Satan can be told he is a liar and a thief when trying to rob us of what Jesus did for us on Calvary. How true is the song "He paid a debt He did not owe, I owed a debt I could not pay."

Because Jesus paid the price with His life's blood, we cannot earn His forgiveness. We can only accept forgiveness with thankful hearts. No wonder humanists reject the biblical story of creation. Then, they won't have to confess their sins to the God and Father who created them. After all, if we only evolved from protozoa, we would not look to God for our moral code.

With no ultimate judge, ethics can become situational. No wonder our country is beset with increased crime, even among the best-educated and intellectual citizens. The gods of intellect and education have been worshiped too long. Through scandals in sports, Wall Street, business, and government, we are seeing these false gods have feet of clay.

If one confesses sins to God in the presence of another human being, it is important to know the person will keep strict confidentiality. Gossips are not

recommended for this kind of ministry. It is true that one can go into one's secret closet to confess sins to God and be forgiven. At the same time, James 5:16 stresses: "Confess your sins one to another so that you may be healed."

An amazing blessing comes to one who carries an unbearable burden of guilt when a fellow believer expresses wholeheartedly our Heavenly Father's forgiveness in a personalized way. Usually, this guilt has been buried for many years, repressed because the thought of the sin was too painful. The truth is all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The forgiven sinner can now "worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (I Chronicles 16:29 KJV). As the Heavenly Father releases His forgiveness, the new joy becomes a beauty treatment—spiritually and physically.

Sometimes this blessing comes to an older woman who years ago had an abortion and never dared to tell anyone. Often the penitent is one who committed fornication. Resultant guilt later seriously interfered with the marriage-bed relationship, marring the joy of a God-given union.

In an amazing number of cases, children, sexually tampered with, usually by relatives or family friends, carry a tremendous burden of secret guilt. Yet, they are the ones who were sinned against. They are usually made to lie about this or are threatened by fear of exposure which might bring severe punishment. The secret may have been kept for 40 years or more.

After experiencing forgiveness, one abused person went into hysterics. Her release from guilt and shame was so great she could not control her feelings. Most people respond with tremendous joy. The abused person needs to verbalize his or her forgiveness of the one who caused it. Incest is increasing or else victims are being more open about disclosing harmful family situations. Wounds from such experiences are so deep only the love of Jesus can heal them.

The world and, sadly enough, some sectors of the Church today claim homosexuals cannot be healed. This is not true of Christians willing to ask for and receive their healing on God's terms.

Ample scriptural references call homosexual relationships sin. Sin must be confessed. Homosexuality usually destroys the possibility of a meaningful, holy marriage. The independent spirit in a homosexual or fornicator causes him to seek sexual gratification for selfish reasons. The same is true of the lesbian person.

Such persons can be set free by Christ. It is a parody for the Church, of which Christ is the head, to condone the ordination of homosexuals or lesbians

in direct disobedience to pointedly clear injunctions of Scripture (Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-10).

Humanism is slipping into the Church to distort the word of God. “Christian humanism” is a misnomer because all humanism is an effort to replace God’s power with man-centeredness. Many of the cults lure people with the false promise they can become God. That is a lie of Satan’s fabrication. Probably the persons succumbing to that lie do not even recognize a devil is deceiving them into their supposed glory trip.

The same god of this world deceives gullible people into thinking reincarnation is true. Thank God, it is not. We are clearly told in Hebrews 9:27, as well as in other Scriptures, there is no coming back. What a hoax is being perpetrated on greedy people today who invest money so when they return in their next incarnation their investment will have quadrupled. Such rubbish sadly gets the attention of people weak in their faith and ready to grasp at the next exciting way to make a fortune. A Christian cannot believe in the false teaching of reincarnation because Jesus is both the expiation and the propitiation for our sins: that is, He has not only paid the debt but He has also satisfied the need for the debt to be repaid.

As all pagan religions teach reincarnation, it is not only sad but also dangerous for Christians to read about them. It is dangerous to “give heed to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,” as Paul warns us in I Timothy 4:1. In Chapter 4:3-4 of his Second Letter to Timothy, Paul describes what is happening today: “For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths.”

In a faraway country, I had the joy of ministering with a Lutheran bishop to a Pentecostal pastor. The pastor came to our VMTC Clergy School of Prayer Ministry for training to minister to others. John (not his real name) gave me permission to use his life-changing story.

When he was a young lad in his teens, John ran away from home. He rebelled by searching for truth in every false, pagan religion and occult practice he could find, not realizing his hunger was for a true relationship with God.

Early in life, a bad relationship with his earthly father blinded John from finding the true God. His spiritual sins, as well as many others, separated him from the love of God. After John was set free from these bondages to the past, overwhelming joy filled his heart. He kept repeating: “I found Jesus when I was

saved, and I found the Holy Spirit when I was baptized in the Spirit. But now, through this ministry, I have at last found my Heavenly Father! I am in my forties, but now I know that, in Jesus, I am God's beloved son."

John has eagerly gone on with VMTC training. He and his lovely wife graduated as experienced ministers to be God's conduit to set captives free to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of Jesus' effective victory at Calvary and the wonderful love of his Heavenly Father and creator. John received a "beauty of holiness" he had never before experienced.

In gratitude to his loving Heavenly Father, John already has been used to minister joyously this new freedom to others. He has helped others falsely seeking truth from doctrines of demons in occult realms, contrary to the word of God. Praise God that He is our merciful, all-powerful, forgiving, ever-loving Heavenly Father!

Christian believers, members of the body of Christ, need to turn away from all sinful thoughts and practices no matter how or when they occurred. The scriptural way to do this is to confess them as sins against God and repent. Then, He can give us "a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezekiel 18:30-32). We need to follow the Lord's warnings through the prophet: "turn and live" (vs. 32).

God does not desire our spiritual death from such causes. He wants us to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. In our own human power, we cannot turn away from sinful habit patterns and addictions, whether spiritual, mental, emotional, or physical. God in His grace provided the way. His son Jesus paid the price for our sins. He took them upon Himself at Calvary. You and I can, with repentant hearts, confess these sins, accept God's forgiveness, and receive the cleansing power of the Blood of Jesus.

Jesus sets us free. He gives us beauty for ashes. He gives us sight where we long have been blind. He opens prison doors so we can walk into His glorious liberty and live in the joyous power of His Holy Spirit! In Ephesians 1:7 (NEB) we read: "In Christ our release is secured and our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood." We can become "freed to live".

Recently, I preached this message at a Saturday night church healing service. A few weeks later, I received this moving testimony to the "beauty of holiness".

A stranger visited that night. She responded to the Lord's call to forgiveness, not only for herself but for others. With her permission, I quote from her letter.

"I have been divorced for fifteen years. My ex-husband married my best friend, the church secretary. We were all in church every time the doors opened. I raised three children who were 9, 11, and 15 years old at the time he left us. For fifteen years I held on to hate, bitterness, and resentment for him and for her. I tried to turn my children against both of them. For several years, I thought it worked.

"I must tell you what happened at your mission the Saturday night of my healing at the altar ministry. You were busy with someone else. So, I went to the minister and his wife and cried as I told them how I hated both my ex-husband and his wife. They made me say their names as they prayed for healing of bitterness, etc. When I left the church service I felt wonderful, so light, like walking on air! I attended every session, even Sunday school. The whole weekend was wonderful and I read all three of your books!

"Let me tell you what happened a month later when my last daughter was married. Her father and his wife had planned and paid for the whole wedding. I was like an invited guest, which I thought I could handle until after the ceremony. All the guests had left for the reception and my ex-husband, his wife, my children, and their spouses were in the back of the church. He said something ugly and I gave it right back to him.

"Then, all of us went to the reception. It was so hard trying to pretend! When all the guests had left the reception except for our family, I told my daughter I was sorry for talking so ugly to her father. She and I embraced and both of us cried a lot of tears. Then I went up to his wife, embraced her, and asked her forgiveness. She asked my forgiveness for all the hurt she had caused. We forgave each other through our tears.

"Then I went to my ex-husband and asked his forgiveness for hating him all these years and making the children hate him. He asked my forgiveness for not being a good husband. What a day that was! He has since written to me and said he was sorry for so many things that happened in our 18 years of marriage.

"Your healing mission really ministered to me. Thank God I've gotten rid of that load! Maybe now God will show me some direction in my life. Also, my children are so happy about us being able to talk at last! God bless you and your work!"

Jesus sets us free. His forgiveness sets us free to live in the beauty of His holiness.

The Christian Family

Over the last 2,000 years, Scripture has not changed its message. Yet, various cultures have not heard it as originally proclaimed by Jesus and the apostle Paul. When Jesus rescued the woman caught in adultery from the men about to stone her, a new attitude toward women sprang forth. Not only was it new, but it was also radical. The prevailing notion that women were hardly more than slaves was disrupted. Many of the accounts of Luke's gospel stress concern for the deplorable position of women.

Paul's letters to the Ephesians and the Colossians expressed a radical departure from the customs of his day. In Ephesians 5:21, Paul admonished his readers: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." Then he addressed the wives: "be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord," quite a different focus from the cultural attitude.

Paul said the headship of the husband to his wife is to be like that of Christ as "the head of the Church, his body." In Ephesians 5:24, this comparison is strengthened: "As the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands." This analogy is straightforward. Christ is the protector and provider in His relationship with the Church. So, too, the husband is to be concerned about his wife's wellbeing.

The wife is to please her husband. The Church as the body of Christ is to please Him, not pull away from His headship. This analogy helps us to see the unity necessary in the wife's relationship with her husband in the Christian family.

Paul brought a beautiful balance into his teaching by cautioning the husbands: "love your wives as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). For a husband to fulfill what Paul described would be impossible without the headship of Jesus Christ in him.

Paul continued in his description of the Christian husband: “Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the Church, because we are members of his body” (Ephesians 5:28-30). After discussing the need for the husband “to leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,” Paul ended with this important summary: “let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” (Ephesians 5:33).

Paul elaborated further on Christian husband-and-wife relationships by saying: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them” (Colossians 3:18-19). The picture given of the wife being subject to her husband as to the Lord’s approval clarifies the relationship as submission, but not as submersion. The Christian husband is portrayed here is specifically admonished against being harsh—no tyrant picture here! Love is the theme of Paul’s description of the order in the home. Here it may be helpful to read I Corinthians 13, Paul’s eloquent definition of love.

In his first epistle, Peter brought a further emphasis on the wife being submissive to her husband and referred to Sarah’s obedience to Abraham as her lord. The apostle described beautifully the Christian wife as one who would win her husband to the Lord by her “gentle and quiet spirit” and her “reverent and chaste behavior” (3:1-6).

Then Peter addressed husbands: “Likewise you husbands, live considerately with your wives, bestowing honor on the woman as the weaker sex, since you are joint heirs of the grace of life” (3:7). Having created the picture of a considerate husband honoring his wife, Peter added words of extra incentive: “in order that your prayers may not be hindered.” These words imply God will not be pleased by the husband who dishonors his wife and treats her in an unloving or cruel way. Male chauvinism is not condoned here.

In his First Letter to the Corinthians Paul declared the principle of headship: “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (11:3). This is the divine order in the home.

The importance of the lordship of Jesus Christ in the husband is emphasized. This foundation makes a difference in relationships with the children. In many homes today, the children are the head, not the husband. This disorder is unwise and unscriptural. When the biblical authority principle is turned upside down, monstrous problems are created in family relationships.

If you, dear reader, are a wife, the Lord may be trying to show you some specific ways to change your relationship with your husband. Are you willing to listen to His Holy Spirit?

Is jealousy of your husband one of those nagging sins you don't want to admit? Do you allow yourself to feel neglected, working up a real pity-party? Or, do you thank God your husband is a responsible man holding down a good job? Do you grumble and complain when he is late from work? After you spent considerable time and money preparing a good dinner, do you spoil it with nagging, sulky looks, and whining voice? If so, you are fulfilling the old adage about "the cow that gave a good bucket of milk and kicked it over."

Wives, do you really listen to your husband? Do you sense the inner wounds in his spirit as a result of his day's conflicts and pressures? How about putting yourself in his place, being concerned about his needs when he opens the door? Do you really welcome him as God's gift to you? Or, do you hasten to dump your day's problems on him before he removes his coat?

Work day's pressures and traffic jams on the way home have not exactly prepared him to be sympathetic until after he can catch his breath. Why not tell him how much you've missed him and leave the details of the children's ailments, escapades and crises till after dinner? Your kindness might save him from having stomach ulcers someday.

Have you ever thought you, as a woman, were called to be a corner pillar? A corner pillar is a very important stone because it gives support to the building in which it is placed. In Psalms 144:12 we read: "that our daughters may be as corner pillars cut for the structure of a palace." In each home, the wife is called to be "the corner pillar," lending support to her husband and children so each better fulfills his or her special place in that "palace." She notices their needs and finds fulfillment in seeing them met through her.

The bride united to her husband in loving respect becomes one with him spiritually and mentally as well as physically. The call to become one flesh is far

more than the oneness of sexual intimacy. Their mutual purpose under God is to build a whole relationship that will grow in beauty and strength over the years.

No wonder the Bible warns: “Do not be mismated with unbelievers” (II Corinthians 6:14). Marriage has a holy purpose. It requires the holiness of God to make it a crown of blessing to the man and woman accepting their union as a call in life to be fulfilled: in mutual, self-giving, sharing love. “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain” (Psalm 127:1a).

A marriage built on lust and selfishness is based on quicksand, not the Lord’s solid ground. When one tires sexually of the other, the marriage will probably sink into the abyss of failure. A marriage built on the illusion that each one can do his or her own thing is like a boat headed for dangerous shoals in stormy seas. A marriage riddled with laziness and self-concern by the wife will collapse.

The corner pillar serves her purpose by supporting and lending spiritual strength to the fulfillment of her mate’s purpose and their children’s needs. She is not to be a doormat to be walked over in selfish disrespect. A corner pillar is polished to become a beautiful, structural, functional source of strength. It does not move away from the relationship to the other living stones with which it is placed. A corner pillar submits to the authority of the master builder. It fulfills as great a purpose as the stones it serves to hold together, even though some may be larger and more impressive.

Although the husband in the Christian family is called by God to be the head, as Christ is head in him, he is not to be arrogant in his relationship with his wife and children. Often, as VMTC prayer ministers, we have seen a bad relationship with the earthly father distort a child’s relationship with his Heavenly Father.

If the earthly father has not expressed love, the child usually grows up with an inability to accept the Heavenly Father’s love. Frequently we hear the adult express the wistfulness of the child within: “I know my father must have loved me, but he never told me so.” Sometimes that uneasy sense of rejection is voiced more strongly: “My father was too busy making money. He never had time for me.” The grown man cannot believe God the Father has time for him either.

If the father is a tyrant and a nominal Christian, or perhaps not a Christian at all, his example will make it harder for his children to accept God's love. Children are to "obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother'" (Ephesians 6:1-2). But Paul also admonished: "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

A cruel, angry father is usually the reason for rebellion in a person's life. Sometimes rebellion is repressed and revealed in procrastination. Children in a home with an alcoholic father or unjust taskmaster are less likely to grow up with a healthy faith in God the Father.

If the father disparages his wife for going to church or becoming religious, he can easily quench his children's faith. The sons in such a family are more apt to become rebellious teenagers. They learn disrespect of God from their father's sneers. The daughter in such a family has a poor role model in choosing her husband. She will think religion doesn't really matter and choose the wrong type of mate.

If the father shows love and respect for his wife, his daughters will subconsciously seek husbands like him. His sons will probably be more careful to choose wives with some of the fine qualities of their mother. Most fathers are unaware of the greatest gift they can give to their children is the gift of a Christian home.

Some men who married Christian wives begin to resent Jesus as if he were a rival lover. In such cases, it is most important for the Christian wife to win her husband by bearing the fruit of the Spirit in her life. It is important for her to live the love of Jesus, not preach about it at her husband. When the wife flaunts her new priorities after she accepts Jesus as her Savior, her husband can feel closed out. His lack of understanding hardens into rebellion against comprehending what she tells him of her new relationship.

If she neglects his needs because of her new ardor for Bible classes and prayer groups, the separation only becomes worse. Her husband may actually be thinking: "What's in this for me? I want my wife for myself. I don't want to share her." The same thing can happen in a wife when her husband neglects her because she is not "spiritual enough."

One of the greatest needs in the Church today is for groups of older men committed to reaching out to disturbed husbands. Hurting husbands can hear the good news better from men they respect and admire. Most men find it harder to come to a living faith in Jesus if their wives have found this reality first and are pushing it at them.

The wife eager for God to change her husband needs to be even more eager for Him to change her first. If she stops doing the thing she knows has been a bone of contention, her husband will notice. For example, if being late and keeping him waiting is the wife's form of passive rebellion, her new punctuality will gain his attention.

Some husbands may be pleased with Scripture verses pinned to their pillows. Others are more apt to be angry at their super-spiritual wives neglecting them. A change of heart, becoming more thoughtful and loving, is a better way. While speaking in tongues is an important gift, the most important result of baptism in the Holy Spirit is the changed life.

The changed wife can be a joyous surprise to her husband. If she welcomes her husband's sexual advances instead of hiding behind tiredness or vague excuses, she will get his attention. The wife does not need to become gimmicky, meeting her husband at the door in a see-through black nightgown. He will know the difference when her heart, as well as her body, is responding to his lovemaking.

If the wife is really "super-spiritual," her everyday life with her husband will bear the fruit of love. He will probably become curious about what she has found. This new reality in her life, the love of Jesus, will become such a blessing to him he will be open to experience it for himself.

In the VMTC prayer ministry, we have seen a changed wife evoke a desire in the husband to receive the same ministry. Even if he does not respond quickly, the new freedom in the wife's life will enable her to be more fully God's channel of forgiving, unselfish love. She will be freed from the fear of confrontations and be better able to resolve future ones in the love of Jesus.

If the wife ministers to her family "as unto the Lord," a new peace will be in the home. She will not manipulate to get her own way, nor be jealous of her children's love for their father. She will be the peacemaker as the Lord guides her.

The Amplified translation of I Thessalonians 5:17 stresses: "Be unceasing in prayer," which means to pray with faith and perseverance. In II Thessalonians 2:17, Paul admonishes his readers to keep their hearts unswerving, to be steadfast

in the Lord, in spite of uncertainties and problems of life. Husbands with the humility to hear the Lord through their wives will be doubly blessed as they face together in prayer the crises and decisions in life. God often speaks through the wife who is committed not just to hear, but to *be* His will.

The pilgrim men who sailed on the Mayflower all carried in their pockets a card which said: "The way to prosper is to love and serve God." Some Christian men today carry in their pockets a small cross to remind them He is the Lord of their lives, including their wallets. The husband who is generous with his wife shows his love by not demeaning her with his stinginess.

The greatest gift a husband can give his wife is not monetary; it is the gift of understanding. Remembering her birthday and their wedding anniversary does not require great sums of money; it requires thoughtfulness. Telling her he loves her, even if the meal was a flop, will assuage her sense of guilt. If he takes a minute to compliment her cooking, she will be encouraged to become a good cook. Appreciation of each other will do much to heal past, nagging criticisms as the love of Jesus becomes newly evident. As each comes closer to Jesus, His love will draw them closer to each other.

The child in a Christian family is blessed if someone believes in him. With parental trust he can bring out problems honestly and be unafraid of unjust judgments, mocking, or teasing.

A Christian family should be without partiality. If a parent feels partial to one child, it is urgent that prayer changes such an ungodly attitude.

A difficult child may need more attention. Children need a parent who realizes their griefs are real and require understanding sympathy, even though to the adult the problem may seem trivial and passing.

Each child needs to know his or her efforts to achieve in life will be met with merited, loving appreciation. If the parent moves the goal farther after the child has eagerly worked to fulfill it, it is damaging. A sense of injustice and resulting bitterness are provoked by the parent who is never satisfied, always demanding more.

The child in a Christian family learns unselfishness through wise and consistent discipline, prayer, and kindly commendation. Both parents need to spend time with their children. At the family altar and in a family conference, prayer and priorities can be shared, giving each member a sense of acceptance. This can be a step in encouraging them to accept Jesus as Savior.

Sadly enough, some marriages reach a point of no return. Usually, divorce does not really solve problems. More problems are created. Jesus gave some

important guidelines not always heeded today, even by Christian couples: “whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery” (Matthew 19:9). Jesus pointed to the sin of thoughts of lust by saying: “everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

In our permissive society, the divorce rate is ever-increasing and many are the victims of the sins of their partners. Others are victims of courts that make divorce too easy. Paul wrote: “But, if the unbelieving partner desires to depart, let it be so: in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. Wife, how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?” (I Corinthians 7:15-16). How few heed this call to peace.

During the divorce process and the years following, the children are badly hurt by the disruption of family life. Most children take the blame on themselves. They feel confused by divided loyalties.

The single parent faces horrendous problems, requiring the Lord’s wisdom to solve. The rejection felt by the injured spouse can only be healed by the love of Jesus. The need to forgive the offending partner, seventy times seven is a necessity. Forgiveness ensures bitterness will not corrode the newly reconstructed home that has lost one of its pillars and lacks the unity of two parents. The legal and financial aspects are often devastating. The emotional wounds, even greater. Loneliness, feelings of inadequacy, and fear of the future can be healed only by the love of Jesus.

The weight of a single parent’s responsibility can only be borne by the Lord, Himself. He promised to be with the believer always (Matthew 28:20). VMTC prayer ministry has helped many single parents to regain their stability. Single parents can then rebuild the shattered fabric of their homes. Christian brothers and sisters in the Church, the family of God, can help single parents shore up their home’s foundations.

In one case, a 40-year-old woman was shocked to find her husband was going to divorce her to marry her best friend. As the husband was a prominent doctor in a small town, this shame was all the more painful. But the mother’s real concern was not so much for herself as for their three teenage sons. They were very angry with their father. They felt not only bitter because of his betrayal but also rejected because he was destroying their home for the other woman.

During the time of our prayer ministry, the wife was healed of feelings of rejection as well as anger, jealousy, fear of the future, and self-pity at the destruction of their home. Forgiving her husband was difficult because of what he was doing to their sons. When this woman's prayer ministry session ended, she had been able to forgive her husband as an act of her will. God's love poured into her heart to make the act of forgiving a reality. The peace of God took away her fears.

Some aspects of her future had not changed. She would see her former friend enjoy the companionship and financial comforts rightfully hers until her husband allowed temptation to become sin and destroy their marriage. But, she had changed! The rejected wife was no longer rejected! She had been healed by the love of Jesus. The amazing grace she experienced in those few hours made her able to trust God for the future. Soon, with the help of their church, she and her sons were able to stabilize their home under the lordship of Jesus.

Praise God! In overcoming what Satan intended for evil, He brought victory. This tragedy brought her much closer to her sons. More importantly, each son came into a living experience with Jesus as Lord of their lives. As their church gave them needed support, each one found fulfillment in the body of Christ. Each found a call to a deeper commitment to the One who made the healing of this family a reality!

The Church as the Bride of Christ

As we have seen in looking at the biblical foundation, the Christian family is to be the little church within the Church. Paul repeatedly refers to the relationship between Christ and His Church representing the relationship between husband and wife.

The sacrificial love of Jesus for the Church is likened to the love the Christian husband will have for his wife. As Christ is the protector of the Church, so the husband is to be the protector of his family. As Christ is the provider for the Church, so the husband is to be the provider for his family. Christ gave himself up for the Church “that he might present the Church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

Competing groups of people are not to dominate the Church. The Church is to be led in unity by the Holy Spirit. The Church’s motivating factor is the love of Jesus.

A loving wife is eager for people to meet and know her husband. The Church as a bride must continually yearn for people to meet Jesus in a close, personal way. The purpose of the bride is to make Christ known to others—not to raise money for good projects. His love is to be shared with those who need to know Him as their personal Savior. When church members leave at the end of a service, their contagious joy of worship can carry them out into their mission field, the world!

Secular humanism creeps into the Church to lure the bride to desert her first love. The self-pleasing world is constantly tempting the bride to think, “What can I get out of the Church?” instead of “What can I give to my Lord?” The only thing we have to give God is ourselves. We need to choose to give ourselves because He created us with free will.

A bride can give her husband many presents, but the gift he wants most is the gift of herself. Jesus calls us, as members of the bride, to give ourselves. This

means not just a trip on Sunday mornings. The call is to give our lives whole heartedly to Him. Abiding in union with Him we fulfill our purpose as His bride. We are the Church—all of us, not just the pastors or priests.

Distractions and temptations come to the Church because it is made up of imperfect human beings. The enemy pressures us to take our eyes off Jesus. Lust, materialism, and pride can divide the Church and distort its vision of being a servant Church. Where pride and self-exaltation infect the Church's bloodstream, Jesus can no longer be Lord. This infection reduces the effectiveness of the Church to redeem the world through His bride's ministry.

Pastor David Wilkerson wrote in his challenging book, *Set the Trumpet to Thy Mouth*, that at one time he lost the Lord's true vision. He began to build a materialistic kingdom. God spoke to him to return to his first vision. God then restored the original call to minister to the street people on drugs in New York. Since then he has built a dynamic church in Times Square.

In a parable of the kingdom of Heaven Jesus remarked how easily the enemy sows weeds in a field of wheat. Jesus warns how the close of the age will be: "The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there, men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 13:41-43). Does the Church need to heed this warning today?

The bridegroom is calling His bride to be "without spot or blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). Are we, the bride, willing to let God circumcise our hearts to remove the sinful lusts of the flesh and the coveting of the eyes characteristic of the world's lifestyle? How can we, the bride, be given to the bridegroom if we are infected by the same disease called "the pride of life" crippling the world today?

Most Christians, although churchgoers, seem to be ignorant of the danger of a worldly spirit. With their worldly lifestyles, the reaper would have a difficult time sorting out the wheat from the weeds. Church-going is more like attending a religious club. Responsibility to the bridegroom seems not to figure in the thinking of many, apparently unaware they are called to be the bride of Christ and that He will return to claim His bride! When He does, will we be the wheat or the weeds? In the end, the good will be separated from the bad for all eternity!

In the Church today, we seem to have three kinds of people. Those who are sure: "It can't be done." Those who say: "It ought to be done and somebody else ought to do it." Then, those who are doing it! Doing what? Bringing in the kingdom. When Jesus called His disciples, He said, "Come," but later He said, "Go." Too many today are saying, "Here am I, Lord. Send someone else."

Jesus has called you and me to both receive and communicate the good news. That call goes beyond knowing the word of God intellectually. Unless you and I can communicate what we believe, we miss the purpose of the Divine Commission. William Barclay, in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, wrote: "The Cross was not to be the end; it was to be the beginning of the unleashing of that power which was to surge throughout the whole world" (p. 156). Are we in the Church unleashing that power? That's part of what we are to communicate. Jesus makes His power available to us through His resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Are we prepared to respond to His call?

In every decision we make, you and I are given the opportunity to decide whether to live for Him. We have the option to give ourselves for others or to live selfishly. A missionary once said: "The sad news is that there are not enough people carrying the good news." All nations, all denominations, all ages, and all ethnic groups are called to fulfill the Divine Commission.

Paul responded to the call, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." For you, the call may be, "Come share the love of Jesus with this helpless mother being victimized by a rebellious teenager," or "Come listen and pray with a woman in shock after being cast off by her husband of 25 years," or "Come pray with a man suddenly told his job has been terminated."

In the Church today, we can become more than an institution. We can share our faith in Jesus. We can live out our love for Him in our everyday relationships, in our own blood family, and in the larger family in Christ redeemed by His Blood. Are you willing to let Him change your lifestyle so someone else receives the spiritual transfusion of His love through you?

To change we must be willing to deny ourselves. One of the ways we can deny ourselves is by fasting. When we think of fasting, we generally think of fasting from food. And, many of us would be healthier if the scales did not tip so heavily!

But Isaiah 58:6-9 refers to another type of fasting: “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’” The fast God has set for us may be to deny our self-will: to go against our own feelings.

When denying ourselves, we learn to discern between our needs and our greed. A wise man once said, “There are no pockets in a shroud.” We can’t take it with us. About half of the parables of Jesus deal with money or wealth. Someone counted over 750 passages in the Bible where money is mentioned. If every person in the Church tithed, there would be ample funds to meet all its needs. Do you trust God enough to release to Him, without fear, anything He asks of you, including that biblical ten percent? He never fails those making this commitment. Why not join the tithers’ club instead of the country club?

Someone said, when the devil whispers to you, “What if?”, you and I can shout back to him, “So what!” If our Heavenly Father is our source of supply, then we will not be worried over dire predictions about the economy. Jesus said: “. . . give and it will be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap” (Luke 6:38). Paul wrote in his Second Letter to the Corinthians: “The point is this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (9:6). What is the Holy Spirit saying to you about your giving?

God is calling His Church to a new obedience to His Word. He wants us to see Christianity as the revelation of His Purposes, not watered-down speculation about the Bible. We need to repent of the sins keeping us from being the Bride without blemish. Our sins are an offense to God. This means repentance is to be our lifestyle, not just a one-time act at conversion. A new life is to be lived in Christ Jesus!

The Church needs to be brought to the living awareness of the relevance of the good news of Jesus Christ in today’s world. The Church as the Bride of Christ

needs to reveal His forgiveness and His unchanging love—His faithfulness in the midst of the faithlessness of humanistic morals and worldly solutions. “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

As we, the Church, proclaim this by the witness of our lives lived in the midst of conflict with the evil one, we can become part of the answer because Jesus is the answer. He has a plan and a place for each one of us in this confused world.

As we, the Church, the body of which He is the Head, yield ourselves to reveal His forgiving love and His empowering Spirit, we can speak to those who are dangerously seeking supernatural power in Satan’s kingdom. We can proclaim to a dying world that wonderful gift of salvation, a wholeness for daily living as well as living eternally in heaven. In His Grace, we become freed to live!

Many in the Church today discount the second coming of Jesus. Others set a date and make prophecy a trip in itself. Jesus warned not even the angels would know the day and the hour of His return (Matthew 24:36). Many prophetic Scriptures already have been fulfilled, especially concerning the restoration of Israel as a nation.

Until Jesus returns, we are called to live expectantly. We are to be like the wise virgins who trimmed their wicks and filled their lamps with oil (Matthew 25:1-13). We need not be put off by the extremists setting a date, seemingly demanding Jesus’ immediate return. The rapture of the Church will take place. Whether it will be before or after the Tribulation, no one can categorically say. Jesus came in fulfillment of prophecy and He gave us prophecies concerning the end times. Rightly used, prophecy helps us patiently await the Lord’s return. It helps us to remember to live in readiness, prepared to meet Christ face to face! Even so, “Come Lord Jesus!” (Revelation 22:20).

As I was about to teach on total commitment at a VMTC Clergy School of Prayer Ministry in June 1987, the Lord gave me this prophecy. The prophecy was printed in the booklet “Expectations for a New Decade” published by Episcopal Church Renewal Ministries for the July 1987 “Congress on the Holy Spirit and World Evangelization” held in New Orleans. May those words speak to your hearts today as they reaffirm II Chronicles 7:14.

“Repent and come apart from your sins of the spirit and of the flesh—and from the humanism which infiltrates and tarnishes your ministry. Set your hearts

and your priorities on Me so that I may strengthen you to turn away from these sins and stand against the deceits and temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

“Pray in My Spirit for a new call to holiness so that the money changers can be cast out and My people will be taught to respond to My call to total commitment—to depend on Me and seek to know My voice amid the clamor of false prophets.

“When My Church becomes purified to be truly My Bride, I will return and call her to Myself. Glorify Me, your Lord and Master, for that is Who I am—not your ‘Cosmic Bell-Hop.’ I love you! You are My Body—but your sins have made a separation between you and Me.

“Turn away from your idolatries and your double-mindedness, from your rebellion against Me and My priorities on your lives. Repent and turn away from these wicked ways. Turn and live in the power of My Spirit. The abundant life does not consist of things. In My presence, you will know the abundance of My love.”

You, the Church, are called to be His Bride.

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