

Study Guide
INSIDE

Modern-Day Jonah

Stop Surviving, Start Living.

ENDORSED

"Modern Day-Jonah is filled with practical ideas on how to break free from self-centered living and reach your potential for God and good in the world."

Gary D. Chapman, Ph.D. – Author of *The 5 Love Languages*

NATHAN TABOR

ENDORSEMENTS

“Jonah ran from God rather than to God. However, when he turned to God his life became extremely successful. In this book, Nathan Tabor shares his own ‘Jonah story’. Many Christians will identify with his journey. What we need is help on how to ‘run toward God’. Modern Day Jonah is filled with practical ideas on how to break free from self-centered living and reach your potential for God and good in the world.”

— **Gary D. Chapman, Ph.D. Author of The 5 Love Languages**

“On paper, I’ve been married to the same man since 2003, but in reality, I’ve been married to two very different men. The first husband was a textbook businessman and entrepreneur. I can scarcely remember ever falling asleep after him, or waking up before him. He worked all the time and I mean ALL the time—even during holidays and while on vacation. He was a force to be reckoned with. He got things done and most people avoided crossing him at any cost. He had a horrible diet and didn’t take care of his health. That said, to our daughter and myself he was always loving and kind, and provided a dream life for us. In hindsight, I can see he was under immeasurable stress and pressure. The second husband, the one I have now, has a totally different perspective on life. He puts work second to his family and his quality of life. You’ll rarely find him working late into the night, and you won’t hear him raise his voice. He’s in great shape thanks to his racquetball hobby, and will happily accept any chore or project asked of him. If I didn’t know the first Nathan so well, I probably wouldn’t be so struck by the simple difference in his eyes. Where I use to see a predator with the next kill in his mind, now I see peace and tranquility.”

— **Jordan Tabor, CEO, Simply Sensational Travel**

“Do you have everything, yet still feel like something is missing? We often get sidelined by the influence of money, status, and power—which causes frustration, dissatisfaction and misery. But don’t lose hope, there’s a Biblical solution to your situation. As you know, God gives everyone a special calling and Nathan Tabor has been called to share his journey away from God and the process he went through coming back to God. When you read Nathan’s thoughtful, faith-filled words, you’ll see the benefit of answering God’s calling on your life. And once you experience the power of God’s will for your life, you can be the godly person you’re meant to be.”

— **Gordon Robertson, President and CEO, the Christian Broadcasting Network**

“As a believer, a former pastor and twice presidential candidate, I’ve seen what happens when people choose to ignore God and do things their own way. It’s essential for Christians to unite their relationship with God to their daily lives. Nathan Tabor is courageous for sharing his personal struggles and admitting the error of his former ways. He confronts the Modern-Day Jonah as a practical model for living a Christian life. This book is a relevant, truthful, and inspiring guide to help individuals meet today’s challenges and struggles with a Christian outlook and answers.”

— **Mike Huckabee, Governor of AR 1996-2007; Host of “Huckabee” on TBN**

“It is my privilege to recommend to your ministry, or organization, Brother Nathan Tabor. God has done a unique work in Nathan’s life. I believe it is beneficial to hear the perspective of a man who has experience and success in business, politics, and many other areas, and yet found himself empty. A person’s most powerful witness is their testimony. I encourage you to allow Nathan to share how God is rewriting Nathan’s story. Everyone needs to be reminded that God has not given up on them, even if everyone else has.”

— **Daniel Hawtree, Pastor, Kerwin Baptist Church, Kernersville, NC**

“This book contains a wealth of practical and spiritual wisdom. It contains Nathan’s testimony (which most of us can identify with), helpful devotionals, and insights on numerous issues. Here you will find a single resource containing a virtual encyclopedia with the steps to get where you want to go. I heartily recommend Modern-Day Jonah.”

— **Harold Vaughan, Evangelist and Founder Christ Life Ministries**

“I commend my friend Nathan Tabor for his graciousness, wit and wisdom. Nathan is very successful, but has always been a humble, though brilliant friend. I recommend that you read and listen to him. God will bless you through Nathan Tabor.”

— **Dr. Ted Baehr, Founder and Producer MovieGuide**

“To get the life you want you have to do things the right way. As Christians, that means doing things God’s way. It means putting God first and applying His word to our lives. But sometimes that easier said than done. We end up making the wrong choices and end up in situations we don’t know how to address. It happened to Jonah, it happened to Nathan Tabor and it’s happened to me. Thankfully, God stands ready to restore us. In this book Nathan does an incredible job of explaining the things we must address in our life and the process of getting it done.”

— **Jason Benham, Nationally Acclaimed Entrepreneur,
Best-Selling Author, Speaker**

“Through Nathan’s personal journey, he has produced a real-time, encouraging work. A transparent opus demonstrating what God can do through repentance and living in obedience. Life lessons in shifting from self to significance. Everyone needs this strong reminder.”

— **Cary E. Vaughn, CEO/President, Love Worth Finding Ministries, Inc.**

“My friend, Nathan Tabor has written a much needed book for all believers. He has written with up front honesty and utmost transparency. While talking about issues that we all face he discusses his own personal struggles with these same issues. So, he’s not preaching “at” us. He’s making it where we can have a candid and open discussion. Many writers do a great job telling us what the “problems” are yet they leave us hanging about how to change or reverse-correct or solve the problems. The Bible character Jonah takes on real meaning when Nathan shows us step by step how easy it is to get away from God while often thinking that we are close to God when in reality we are far, far away from Him. And although we might want to blame others or our circumstances the reason usually is because of our own choices. Nathan, through this man Jonah shows us how we can get things right with God and no matter how far away a person is they can return to our Father and have a right relationship and a victorious life. This is a great book for individuals to read or for families to read together. It would make an excellent study for your churches small group or Sunday School.”

— **Tim Lee, Evangelist**

“This is the story of a modern day “Jonah” that every person should read. All Christians have some measure of their own “Jonah experience” in their walk with God. It may be hidden from public eyes, but the capacity to stray from the Father’s presence is within every heart. Within this wonderful book Nathan Tabor recounts his own spiritual wandering and best of all, the way back to God’s care and mercy. It is a worthy reading which, with rare honesty, declares the darkness and sin and the joy of redemption.”

— **Richard G. Lee, PhD, President and Speaker, There’s Hope America**

“A Modern Day Jonah is one man’s search to reconnect with God. He tells of his journey away from God and the circumstances that caused him to seek out God and reform his life to live in right relationship with God. In the process of telling about his transformation, the author provides a synthesis of best practices by which to order one’s life after first putting God. The layout of the book lends itself to being a good reference tool and ensures that the book will be easy to use on a regular basis. For those struggling in their own lives, the book will serve to guide them back to God. For others, the ideas in the book will serve a reminder of what steps must be taken to avoid falling into the same pitfalls that lead us away from God and into a miserable existence.

— **Barbara Holt, Past President, North Carolina Right to Life**

“Nathan Tabor is a Christian with a poignant personal story. He grew up a preacher’s kid, has a remarkable account of business success as an entrepreneur, and was a candidate for the United States Congress. However, lying beneath the veneer of all his successes was a young man headed for catastrophic crisis. Today, by the grace of God, he is an eminent success in all the things that really matter: peace of heart, relationship with wife and daughter, and personal walk with Jesus Christ, his Lord.”

— **Howard Wilburn, Retired Pastor, Salem Baptist Church, Past Present, Piedmont Bible College**

“Nathan Tabor’s humility and transparency makes this book easily relatable to the average American Christian who is doctrinally saved, but practically has never learned to experience the relationship God wants us to have with Him and those around us. This book is for anyone who truly wants to surrender their life to God...and reap the many blessings from doing so.”

— **Brad Dacus, President, Pacific Justice Institute**

“So many go through life wearing a mask to cover the hurt, embarrassment, shame, and doubt that rages inside. After years of wearing the mask, Nathan realized that wealth and success drove him further from happiness and health. But God continued to pursue Nathan, and when he finally surrendered everything to Jesus, the mask was removed and his emotional, physical, and spiritual healing began. Now Nathan shares his personal struggles with the world—those of us who could only see the mask. It is a powerful and moving story of redemption. Nathan’s books is both an invitation to remove the mask and a challenge for each one of us to live life deeper with friends and the Body of Christ to look beyond the mask. This book is about how all of us have the tendency to run from God like Jonah, and it is a roadmap for returning to God who is our only hope. “

— **Mathew D. Staver, Esq., B.C.S., Founder and Chairman, Liberty Counsel**

“Nathan has been a steady encouragement to all those who hear him speak, read his devotions, or follow him on Social Media. Through transparency, he compels other believers to make wise decisions and live the Christian life as God intends. I believe his heart and message are truly needed.

— **Sam Hicks, Pastor, West Asheboro Baptist Church, Asheboro, NC**

“The moment I started reading this book I knew I wanted to apart of it. This book is a reservoir of wisdom—highlighting helpful insights from Nathan’s testimony, and sharing key biblical perspective on pressing issues in our generation. You most certainly won’t regret this read—share it with a friend or 5. I truly recommend this for anyone who may be in need of a fresh and timely word from God.”

— **Rashawn Copeland, Evangelist and Author, Without Walls Ministries**

“Nathan’s story is all about gaining a deeper awareness of brokenness in our lives in order that we may drink more deeply from the well of unmerited grace. If God is indeed glorified when we are most satisfied in him, then those who rediscover the glorious depths of his love will both experience and express profound peace and contentment. Be encouraged by Nathan’s testimony of the relentless love of Christ!”

— **Walker Armstrong, Executive Director, Pilot Mountain Baptist Association**

“Nathan Tabor has been a good friend of mine for many years. I have always admired his work ethic, integrity and leadership skills but in most recent times I have an even greater respect for his honesty and transparency. As he has written about how God used circumstances in his life to allow him to see life from a different perspective and see true success is not as what he has strived for most of his life, I have come to respect him that much more. Nathan is a man of God who is committed to making a difference in others’ lives and in the world around him.”

— **Sharon Kelly, Executive Director, LifeLine Pregnancy Help Center, Elkin, NC**

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NATHAN TABOR

Modern-Day Jonah
by Nathan Tabor

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DEDICATION

*This book is dedicated to my wife.
She is the love of my life and my best friend.
She has stuck with me through thick and thin.*

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INTRODUCTION:

The Story of Jonah

“Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.”

(Jonah 1:1-2)

THOUGH ONE OF THE SHORTER BOOKS IN THE BIBLE, grouped within the prophet books near the end of the Old Testament, the book of Jonah contains a powerful story, one that transcends time and transforms lives. Jonah’s rejection of God’s mission and the subsequent troubles that befell him and led to his eventual surrender offer the same calling to each of us today. God might not be telling us to call far-off cities to repentance, but He does have a purpose and plan for us. The question, then, is will we obey in surrender to His will for our lives, or will we, like Jonah, try to run?

Jonah’s story began when God called him to travel to the city of Nineveh, in order to share God’s love and warn the people of God’s wrath for their disobedience. Jonah didn’t like the people of Nineveh, and he believed they didn’t warrant God’s forgiveness because they were a heathen city, full of sinful and wicked people. On top of all that, he also had to deal with his own flesh and the fear of what harm might come to him.

Jonah had a choice to make—he could either obey God or disobey God. He chose to disobey God, to do what he felt was best for him, and from an earthly standpoint, Jonah did nothing wrong. He didn't steal money, he didn't sneak on the boat, nor did he murder anyone. His only offense was disobeying God.

The scriptures don't cover this part, but I imagine Jonah had smooth sailing for some time. I can imagine that the sunrises and the sunsets were beautiful, the water was smooth, and the dolphins were jumping all around the boat. It was the cruise of a lifetime.

However, Jonah belonged to God, and God wasn't pleased with Jonah's decision to disobey him. The scriptures state that God pursued Jonah and sent storms, winds, and waves to get Jonah's attention. Proverbs 30:4 states, "God gathers the winds in His fists."

Think about this—if Jonah had done what God called him to do, would he have experienced these storms? No. Jonah's sin brought storms into his life and storms into the lives of those around him. God wanted him to turn back. What was Jonah's response?

At first, he went to sleep. Jonah was most likely depressed and didn't want to face the storms in his life, so he was trying to ignore them. But the captain called him to the deck and asked him, "O' sleeper, how can you be asleep when we are about to die?" Think about that—Jonah was called by God to go and sound the alarm at Nineveh, yet, instead of serving God, he found himself in circumstances that led to him being questioned by a pagan.

Things at that point were severe in Jonah's life. The storms continued with the potential to kill everyone, and Jonah knew the power of prayer, yet he slept. Jonah couldn't sincerely pray for deliverance because he knew he wasn't right with God. Jonah's sin had dulled his senses and lowered his mindset, and not only were his actions causing himself issues, but they were also causing issues for others around him. Those around him didn't have any choice about being in the midst of his storm.

Nothing worked in stopping the storm, baffling everyone on board. So, the captain and crew cast lots to see who was to blame for the storms. Can you imagine what Jonah's face looked like while the lots were being cast? He was probably thinking, *Please, please don't let the lots land on me! Don't let me be found out!*

The lots landed on Jonah, and instead of being honest, he denied the storms were his fault. Only after the captain and mariners begged Jonah to be honest did he admit his sin. Jonah admitted he had fled from the presence of the Lord. This makes the mariners very afraid, and they ask Jonah why he had done this to them. He had no good or logical answer.

It's sad that Jonah didn't step up and take responsibility. He only confessed his sins when he had no other option. Not only had he failed to reach the people of Nineveh, he then failed to reach the captain and mariners.

Jonah finally confessed his sins, but the storms didn't stop. They still raged and beat against the ship. Why? Because while Jonah had confessed his sins, he had taken no steps to correct his sins. He was still going the opposite of where God wanted him to go.

Then one of the most unique things in the entire story happened. In order for Jonah to go the direction God wanted him to go, he had to jump out of the ship into the raging sea, a task which would make anyone stop and pause and consider the consequences. At this point, Jonah knew exactly what he needed to do, but his self-preservation and self-centeredness were keeping him in misery and conflict, and he had to ask others to help him get going in the right direction because he could not do it on his own. Jonah had been impersonal and arrogant with these men, but once he was willing to admit his mistakes, they were willing to forgive him and help him.

The mariners didn't actually want to throw Jonah overboard. They didn't want his blood on their hands. But they came to understand that God's will outweighs their own inclinations. Even in Jonah's great disobedience, God was able to use Jonah to reach the mariners, and what happened when the mariners

cast Jonah into the sea? The storms immediately stopped, and the mariners immediately turned their lives over to God.

Then the most amazing thing happened—Jonah didn't drown in the raging sea because God delivered him. God, who created and controls all the heavens and earth, still had plans for Jonah. God sent a fish to swallow Jonah, which kept him from drowning. Though the fish probably wasn't the way Jonah wanted to return to God, Jonah had made the choice to disobey God. From an earthly standpoint, this had to be one of the worst possible positions to be in. Jonah didn't know he was getting out in three days. I think it's safe to say Jonah believed he was going to perish in the belly of that fish.

How did Jonah respond? First, Jonah admitted to God that he had brought this affliction upon himself. Second, Jonah started praying to God and thanking Him for his grace and mercy. Jonah knew God was extending kindness to him when he didn't deserve it, and Jonah knew God was delivering him from the judgment he deserved.

Jonah didn't question God about why he was in the belly of a fish, and he didn't blame the mariners for throwing him overboard. He didn't complain about it being pitch dark, nor did he complain about having seaweed wrapped around his head. Jonah was content and at peace, and he was once again looking to God. He was communicating with God, and he was accepting responsibility for his actions. Was the process easy for Jonah?

No, it was not comfortable or easy, and at times Jonah felt sorry for himself. At one point, he even questioned where God was, but if you read the story in the Bible, you will notice Jonah doesn't stay in the mindset of questioning God. He recovered by doing two things—praying and seeking comfort from God. Then he started to focus on all the things God had done for him. These two acts served as an encouragement to Jonah.

You see, Jonah had a pride issue, he had a forgiveness issue, he had a patience issue, he had a wisdom issue, and he had a daily walk issue. However, God worked in his heart, and the longer Jonah spent in the belly of the fish, the more his spirit broke and

his heart was humbled. This is what God wanted from him.

Jonah had no idea he was going to be spat out on the beach in three days. He had been swallowed by a fish, and he most likely thought he was going to die. However, the moment Jonah asked for forgiveness God forgave him and restored him. He comforted and protected him because God loved Jonah and had a calling on his life. However, God didn't stop the consequences of Jonah's actions.

When those consequences were over, God still had a mission for Jonah. When the fish spit Jonah on the shore, God again told Jonah to go to Nineveh, and this time Jonah immediately went. He didn't hesitate, and he didn't come up with excuses. He went because he had a change of heart through true repentance. He was serving God because he knew this was best for him and his life.

Think about this: God still commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh, even after all he went through. When God calls us to do something, he doesn't change His mind because we disobey or throw a temper tantrum. We can make it harder on ourselves and go on a long detour before obeying Him, or we can just obey Him. God also doesn't shelve people who have sinned because if He did, there would be no one to share the gospel with others. Even though Jonah had given God every reason not to trust him, God still forgave him, restored him, and used him to reach the people of Nineveh.

This story may have taken place thousands of years ago, but God still has a purpose and calling for every person, and every person is faced with the same choice Jonah had—either run from God's calling in disobedience, thus creating storms, or say yes to obeying God's calling, thus gaining the blessings and protection of God. Though I eventually ended up saying yes to God's calling, I, like Jonah, took the hard way.

1

Modern-Day Jonah

“But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.”

(Jonah 1:3a)

EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT THAT FAMILIAR with the Jonah story, you can probably relate to him. You see, Jonah choose to ignore God's instructions and do things his way. Now in Jonah's mind, he thought he had every right to do what he did. He saw nothing wrong with his actions and the world say NOTHING wrong with his actions.

However, he didn't do things right according to God's instructions and his choice to disobey God lead to storms in his life and those around him. Then Jonah choose to male these storms worse by choosing to continue to ignore God.

At first, Jonah tried to resolve his situation by sleeping, then by lying and then by blaming others. In the end, Jonah had to choose to rectify his choices by taking steps to get right with God.

I've been right there. I've ignored God's word and caused storms in my life and those around me. I've been a Modern-Day Jonah.

I tried to "cure" myself by making money and growing my businesses. I've tried to ignore the storms by spending money on things, by taking vacations and by even blaming others for my situation. Doing this allowed me to temporarily soothe the "things" going on in my life, and it allowed me to ignore my root issue of needing to get right with God.

The problem was my distractions never lasted long enough, and eventually it became crystal clear I had to make a change. This is exactly what Jonah did in the Bible. He ignored God's instructions and then tried everything he could of to avoid getting right with God.

Is that where you are? Are you ignoring God's word? Are you causing storms in your life?

If so, what are your distractions? Is it playing video games, watching TV, surfing social media, consuming food, hanging out with friends, growing your business, making money, having a few drinks, or maybe I haven't mentioned it, but it's something.

It's something you are doing to ignore what's going on in your life and whatever it is, I know with 100% certainty it won't cure the problem. The problem is you're a Modern-Day Jonah and until you confess it your storms are going to continue rocking your life.

Point of Clarity: There are two types of trials and tribulations in our lives. The first type of trial is what Job went through. Job had no choice in the matter. He didn't do anything which lead to the storms in his life.

The second type of trial is what Jonah went through. Jonah had a choice in the matter. He chose to ignore God's word and do things his way. His choice caused his trials and tribulations.

A Modern-Day Jonah

A Modern-Day Jonah is someone who ignores God's calling on their life. They make a conscious decision to disobey God and they are deliberate and calculated in their actions. They are fully aware of their choice—just like Jonah and when the storms come, they ignore them, they aren't forthcoming with the truth and they blame others—just like Jonah.

A Modern-Day Jonah has stopped focusing on God, they have stopped studying His word, they don't have a meaningful prayer life and they have stopped trying to develop our relationship with Him—they have drifted away from God.

The Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome

The Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome is a condition caused when a believer ignores God's word and calling in their life. The believer makes this choice because they want to do things their way. The Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome starts out slowly but can quickly consume a believer. It affects the behavior, emotions and opinions of the believer and ultimately affects all those around the believer. As the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome takes over, it suffocates one's ability to be Christlike and their desire to serve God.

The Modern-Day Jonah Symptoms

The symptoms of Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome include but aren't limited to: stress, anxiety, conflict, poor self-control, chaos, depression, misery, bitterness, strife, self-deception, confusion and sleep deprivation. Those affected with these symptoms search for and apply solutions to their problems like making money, buying things, taking trips, socializing, drinking and ignoring issues. However, these solutions may temporarily resolve the problem, but they will not last.

The Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome affects all aspects of life: personal, professional, financial, physical and spiritual. It is not a medical or scientific issue; it's a condition caused by a believer's

choices. Those affected by the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome don't acknowledge or appreciate the severe and damaging effect this syndrome has on their lives and those around them until it has reached an epic, dangerous, serious and advanced stage.

The Modern-Day Jonah Cure

There is only one cure, and that cure is *getting right with God*. You must admit you aren't right with God, confess your sins to Him, and call out to Him in repentance. Until these steps are taken, your "storms" will continue to get worse.

Are you suffering from the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome? Are you tired of feeling stuck, being frustrated or wondering around aimlessly? Are you tired of being miserable, anxious, stressed, worried and in constant conflict? If so, the Handling Life Program is exactly what you need.

It's time to stop the distractions and start a process which addresses the issues in your life. Matthew 11:28 says, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*"

Why Turning Back Is Worth It

What Jonah didn't consider is Jonah he didn't stand a chance when he started running from God. Why? Because we can run from God all we want, but we can *never* hide from God. I also discovered this fact the hard way.

You see, the further we get away from God, the harder we make our lives—eventually every aspect of our life is affected. Then what do we do? Instead of coming back to God, we give into depression and anxiety which leads to us making more bad decisions.

So, why don't we simply come back to God? Because in our minds it's easier to stay where we are than get right with God. I felt this way in my life. The thought of dealing with all the issues I had caused overwhelmed me. My reaction was to quickly replace it with "I'm good where I am."

I acted just like Jonah. I went to the bottom of the boat and laid down. I purposely ignored all the issues going on and went to sleep. How many of you are in the midst of a storm right now but have “fallen into a deep sleep” just as Jonah did? It’s time to wake up! Do you truly believe that if you just “sleep,” then God is going to stop calling you?

Not only did Jonah’s actions create a storm around himself, but they also affected those around him.

“Then the mariners were afraid; and every man cried out to his god, and threw the cargo that was in the ship into the sea, to lighten the load. But Jonah had gone down into the lowest parts of the ship, had lain down, and was fast asleep.” (Jonah 1:5)

While I was “sleeping” and while you are “sleeping,” others around us are suffering. Our actions are causing the boat to be rock back and forth. This isn’t fair to them, and it’s not what God wants for our lives. Stop for a minute to consider, “What is the impact you are having on those around you?” Remember, one day we will all stand before God and give an account for our actions.

“So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Romans 14:12)

I had to ask myself, could I stand before God and be proud of the account of my life that I knew would be laid before him? When I came face-to-face with that reality, I began to look for the true cure to this syndrome.

Why Don’t We Obey God?

Like God called Jonah, God has called every Christian to serve Him. Does that mean we immediately start serving Him? Jonah shows us a clear example of the answer to that, which

is, unfortunately, no. No, we do not always immediately start serving Him. After we accept Jesus as our personal savior, we have two options:

1. *Obey God.* This means you are striving daily to serve God. If you are currently in this category, then stay in God's word, keep praying and keep seeking Him. Don't let your relationship become stale.
2. *Ignore God.* You have made a choice to do things your way. If you are in this category, then you aren't alone. Many, many Christians are in this category. Problem is most won't admit it and do nothing to address or change it.

What was Jonah's excuse? He didn't like the people of Nineveh. I've read several different things Jonah might have been thinking. The one I like the most is that Jonah was upset because of what the people of Nineveh had done. They were wicked people in his sight. He thought they were horrible sinners, and he was right. Jonah was frustrated with God's request. Jonah had spoken out against the people of Nineveh, and now God wanted him to go witness to them. Jonah was really struggling with the task God had called him to do.

What Jonah missed was that we are all sinners. Not one of us deserves what God has done for us. I also missed this principle. God had a calling on my life, but my excuse for not doing things God's way was because I had been done wrong by various people over the years. Many times, those who had done me wrong professed to be Christians. Instead of dealing with these issues in a biblical way, I let bitterness and frustration take hold in my heart and in my mind.

Know what happened?

Over time I became the type of man who had done me wrong in the past. In my eyes, the “thing” I did was a reaction to something they had done. Rationalization allowed me to develop situational ethics. My wrong wasn’t as bad as their wrong; therefore, I was right. That, my friend, is called messed up logic! As my daddy always told me growing up, two wrongs never make a right.

Why Do We Ignore God?

Normally we simply don’t like what God says or commands or we don’t want to do it. Essentially, since we can’t see God’s overall plan, we don’t buy in. We would rather sing Frank Sinatra’s song of “I did it my way.”

Here’s the kicker that really makes this topic interesting. Sin is sin, right? A little white lie is a sin, stealing is a sin, having inappropriate thoughts is a sin, losing your temper is a sin, and the list goes on and on.

What’s the big difference then? Simple. The consequences. Look at it this way. There are two men. One man leaves his wife and children for another woman. The other man tells a little white lie about why his work project is late. Will the consequences for these sins be the same? No. Sin is sin but, the degree of consequences in life is different.

So, whether you simply ignoring God’s call on your life because you have a bad attitude or you are flat out running as fast as you can away from God the result is the same. You are ignoring God’s call on your life and there will be consequences. The level of your consequences will be determined by your actions and how far you “run” from God.

Let me share a point of clarity. There are two types of trials and tribulations in our lives. The first is what Job went through. In the life of Job, we see trials and tribulations outside of his control because God allowed the devil to test Job. It wasn’t Job’s choice, and he had no control over it. Job didn’t cause these trials and tribulations, but he still had to face them, and he still had to deal with them.

Let me share an example which happened in my life. In 2016, a lady rear-ended me. I was obeying all the traffic laws, and the accident was 100% her fault. There was nothing I could have done to avoid it. This accident caused major nerve damage in my neck and lead to me having anterior cervical spine surgery. I will deal with this for the rest of my life.

In the life of Jonah, we see the second kind of trials and tribulation, the kind that we bring upon ourselves. Jonah brought the trials and tribulations upon himself. It was his choice. He went the opposite direction of where God had called him and created storms in his life. Had Jonah been where God wanted him to be, he could have avoided these trials and tribulations.

I've done this as well and had to suffer from the consequences of my actions. Several years ago, I had a business deal go sideways and instead of sitting down and working it out, I let my temper and desire for vengeance take over. Yes, I won the lawsuit, but I brought stress, anxiety, and massive legal bills into my life. Had I done things God's way, I could have avoided these storms.

Half-Hearted Obedience

Sometimes we pretend we are obeying God by half-heartedly obeying. Half-hearted obedience is where you say, "I guess I'll serve God today" with your shoulders slumped over. This is not the obedience God seeks. In this kind of serving, there is no passion, love, or commitment in your thoughts or actions.

Cain and Abel both sought to serve God. Abel took the path of giving God the best he had, something he really needed. Cain decided to give God something he really didn't need, so his sacrifice wouldn't really impact his life.

When Abel was blessed by God, Cain became extremely jealous! He blamed God, he blamed Abel, but he didn't take responsibility himself. Cain obeyed by giving an offering, but it wasn't the proper offering—it was a half-hearted one. Half-hearted obedience is still disobedience and will bring storms into our lives.

It's a Conscious Decision

Our decision to whole-heartedly obey God or ignore God is a conscious one. Each time we are faced with a decision, we have this choice. In Jonah's case, he decided to deliberately disobey God.

"But Jonah arose to flee from the presence of the Lord."
(Jonah 1:3a)

Remember, Jonah wasn't just a Christian—he was a prophet!

What is a Prophet? It's a person regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God.

Jonah knew better than anyone what he was doing, yet his flesh was able to control him. Jonah decided with 100% resolution "to flee"—he turned and ran from God.

Are you running from God?

I was running for a long time, and I knew better. I grew up in the church, graduated from a Christian school, and got my master's degree from Regent University. I worked with and for some of the top ministries in the world, and I sat on the board of the National Religious Broadcasters. I heard and knew the word of God. Yet, I still *chose* to "run" from God.

My thought process went like this: I wasn't a bad person, I wasn't out drinking or cheating on my wife, and I was, for all practical purposes, an upstanding citizen. Therefore, all was right in the world, right? It wasn't. My tree wasn't producing the right type of fruit.

Are you making a conscious decision to "run" from God? Be honest, how's it working out? It didn't work out well for me. In fact, it's what I call the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome.

*Ask yourself—
am I suffering from the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome?*

You Aren't Alone

Many Christians have chosen to ignore God's calling on their lives, which has produced misery in their personal, professional, physical and financial lives. Relationships are falling apart, their attitude is poor, tempers are out of control, and virtually every part of their life is out of balance. They search to find balance but can't ever seem to make the pieces of the puzzle fit together.

Down deep they know exactly what they need to do, but pride has confined them. They've convinced themselves that they are right and everyone else is wrong. They've become trapped in their own thought process. Fear keeps them cornered and they're afraid to discuss their feelings with their spouse or others because the lines of communication have been broken from years of neglect.

They may attend church and go through the motions, but they have allowed the flesh to convince them that the process of coming back to God is too hard. Ultimately, their pride and inability to admitting fault is stronger than the desire to be the person God has called them to be. I know this first hand, because I was this Christian at one time in my life.

Christians are human like everyone else. They are prideful, arrogant and self-centered, often focusing on "performance" rather than a true relationship with God. Failure leads to frustration, stress and anxiety—making them feel like they are going through the motions or "just getting by." This mindset causes significant problems in every area of life.

Many Christians choose to be miserable, and they don't even know it. Rather than to turn back to God, they do everything they can to "fill the void," like focusing on material things. They work tirelessly to pay for new items, convincing themselves that everything will be okay, if they just get to a certain point in their life. When they get there, they find "peace" for a season, but

eventually all the stress, anxiety, conflict and misery come back with a vengeance.

Ask yourself these questions, and I challenge you to answer honestly:

- Have you chosen to ignore God's calling on your life?
- Are you "asleep" while the storm rages around you?
- Are you hurting others around you?
- Are you ready to change but don't know where to start?
- Are you fearful of what happens if you start to give God control?

Jonah could have turned back to God at anytime. Consider this—had Jonah walked to the pier and not gotten on the boat, would his consequences have been the same? Probably not.

The point is simple. The sooner you turn back to God the better. The further you get away from God means the further you have to come back.

Ready for some awesome news?

Anytime you are ready to start answering God's call on your life, God is ready for you. The moment I gave it all to God, the burdens of life lifted from my shoulders. I knew immediately I had made the right choice.

No matter where you are on this journey, it's time to stop and turn towards God. God has promised to protect us and deliver us "back to dry ground."

Does God promise the process to be easy? No.

I know what you are going through because I've been there. Your mind won't stop thinking of excuses, scenarios and reasons why you should not turn back to God. You can't see a clear path out, and all your efforts so far have failed. The internal mental

arguments, emotions, and feelings are dominating your life and thoughts. In the chapter on mind games, we are going to address this.

Is your current life easy? No.

Is this process easy? No.

Is turning back to God worth it? Yes

The hard part is in our minds. There are various challenges, discomforts, and inconveniences. This makes turning back to God hard, but I can promise you it's worth it.

What to Expect from Others

If you choose to begin obeying God and turning back to Him, don't be surprised when others around you don't immediately buy in, especially your spouse or those closest to you. It's understandable. How many times over the years have you made promises to do better or be better that you didn't keep? Personally, I did more times than I can count! I would be better for a day, a week or even months, but eventually, I would slip back in my ways.

Realize this upfront. Acknowledge to yourself that it is going to take time and patience for you to get where you want to go. Commit to yourself that you are going to stick with it. Focus on God's word and His promises. God promises us all throughout scripture what we can expect when we serve Him.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you," saith the Lord, "thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:11-13)

It's time to start focusing on what God thinks about you. I promise you if you turn back to God, stay on His path and apply His word to your life, things will get better! You will have the joy and peace you want in your life. You will have the relationships you so desire, and you will have the peace, joy, and contentment which comes from walking daily with God.

Not sure all this is for you?

Let me challenge you with these questions. Are you happy with the way your life is going? The way your relationships are going? Are you stressed? Anxious? Worried? Miserable? Be completely honest with yourself. If you're not happy, content, and satisfied then you have two options:

1. Ignore God's calling, do nothing, and continue to be miserable and stressed.
2. Obey God's calling, develop a relationship with Him and reap the benefits.

Think about it. The current way, your way, isn't working. This is ultimately why I gave in. I was tired of doing things my way and getting the same results.

If you are tired, then it's time to turn back to God. Matthew 11:28 says,

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

I do want to caution you that if you choose to stay on your current path, you can expect the storms to get worse like they did for Jonah. Sure, things might get better for a season, but it won't be long before life is crushing you again.

The Choice YOU Make

This is a picture of a Modern-Day Jonah's life. You have made the choice to put yourself at the center of your life.



This is a picture of a Christ-Centered life. You have made the choice to put God at the center of your life.



Jesus made it very clear that you can NOT serve God and your flesh at the same time. Then James describes what happens in your life when you are double-minded.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”
(James 1:8)

2

My Personal Story

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

(Galatians 6:7-9)

GOD HAD A CALLING ON MY LIFE and a plan for me, but instead of following His calling, I did things my way. For years, I struggled internally to find balance in my life. It didn't seem to matter what I did or how I did it; I simply could *not* find balance. The sad part is deep down I knew exactly what I needed to do, but that wasn't part of *my* plan. I didn't want to give God control. I didn't want to get my heart right with God. My choices produced an unbalanced life that led to stress, anxiety, chaos and ultimately misery. It was trying to put a puzzle together, but the pieces weren't cut properly.

I was a Modern-Day Jonah, rebelliously running from the calling that God had placed on my life and, therefore, encountering storms along the way. So much destruction descended upon my family and me because of my own failure to simply obey God. As Jonah did, I found myself in a miserable place where I had no choice but to relent and surrender to God's higher call on my life.

At first, I blamed everyone around me for the storms. It was easy enough to ascribe my problems to a combination of past hurts, rejection, and the decisions of others. This drove me to push harder to prove I could do what I wanted.

While all the past hurts, rejections, and decisions of others were true, they were not my root problem. Just like Jonah, I had no one to blame for my storms but myself. I had wanted to go my own way and to follow my own path, and this is where it had led me. I had created my own problems because I had not been obedient to God. I had been on a long, slow process of drifting away from God. I was suffering from the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome.

My Background

I grew up in Owens Cross Roads, Alabama. I was raised from childhood in a conservative, evangelical Christian home, and my dad was a pastor. I was taught the importance of going to church, reading my daily proverb, and praying to God. When I was six, I accepted Jesus as my personal Savior. In my teenage years, I was baptized and considered myself a reasonably good Christian person. I was going through most of the motions required of a Christian.

We were poor but had everything we needed. A can of Vienna sausages and crackers were quite the treat, and wearing patched up jeans to school wasn't weird because everyone else had on patched up jeans. I have fond memories of the way I grew up and wouldn't change a thing about it.

By the age of 40, my patched-up jeans had been replaced with

designer jeans. I had worked long and hard, and I was enjoying the fruits of my honest labors. As a hard-driving Christian entrepreneur, I had managed to parlay my God-given business acumen, natural tenacity, and technological savvy into a bevy of business interests that generated hefty profits and a positive cash flow. I owned seven apartment complexes (399 units), a car lot and a consulting company. All of them had been profitable business enterprises over the years.

My personal desire was to give my family the best of everything. We lived in a nice neighborhood outside of Winston-Salem, NC, and we had purchased a vacation home in the mountains. I drove a new Porsche and from all outward appearances, I was living the American Dream, and I relished that superficial image of glamorous prosperity.

Trouble Lurking Under the Surface

Underneath my external veneer of entrepreneurial confidence and success, I was really a nervous wreck, plagued by spontaneous, unpredictable panic attacks. The pressures in my life were building to an almost explosive level. Emotionally, I was wracked by anxiety and stress. The more my companies grew, the more I started to feel like I was trying to put a square peg in a round hole. I knew something was off. I always said I just couldn't put my finger on it. The reality was I didn't want to put my finger on it.

I was always working frantically just to keep everything going from week to week and month to month. My mind constantly ran numbers and deals. How much did I owe? How much did I have? When was the next deal coming or closing? This kept me on a roller coaster of worry and fright.

I lived in constant fear that my financial house of cards was going to come crashing down any day. I woke up worried about money, worried about it all day, and went to bed worried about it.

The odd thing is I didn't really have a reason to be worried. I had money in the bank, businesses were doing well, but I just

couldn't find balance in my life (hindsight: My problem was I had become consumed with money—trying to make it and keep it).

So, my solution was to find things to occupy my mind. I became a compulsive consumer, buying things I didn't need, using excessive and extravagant purchases as a distraction from the calling on my life. However, no matter what I tried, it didn't last.

I tried to rationalize why I was living in such a frenzied state. I didn't want to deal with the reality of my situation. Sometimes, I would make the excuse I was doing it to satisfy my wife and daughter because I didn't want to disappoint them.

Periodically, I took my family on vacation to places like London, Paris, Cancun, the Virgin Islands, and Disney World—twenty-five times in five years. The problem was I was so stressed I couldn't relax long enough to enjoy any of those experiences with my wife and daughter. No matter where we were, I was always busy on my cell phone or computer, talking, texting or emailing somebody about some business deal or emerging crisis back home. Personally, I don't like conflict, but I always seemed to be right in the middle of a conflict. Looking back, "busyness" was my distraction. It kept me from focusing on the real issue.

It even got to the point where I would stay up to 2am or 3am watching TV shows on my iPad because I dreaded getting up in the morning. I knew there were things I had to do, but I just couldn't get my arms around everything.

The moments of happiness I got from trips and material things didn't fill the void that was growing bigger and bigger. I constantly felt the burden of managing my multiple businesses and dealing with the constant conflict I had produced. I was stressed, I was anxious, and I was becoming lethargic. I had become obsessed with making money, but my lack of consistent discipline as a business owner and manager was causing me problems and costing me money. My harried intensity toward life was wearing me down.

My Health

I was an accomplished athlete in high school, especially in basketball, which can come with many injuries. As I'm sure you know, when you are young, you usually bounce back fairly quickly from injuries. This was not the case for me. By the age of sixteen, I was visiting a chiropractor weekly and had had knee surgery, and by my late twenties, I was having some serious neck and back pain.

Entering my thirties, I was diagnosed with degenerative disk disease and mild spinal stenosis. To control the pain, I had monthly steroid shots in my spine, trigger point injections in my muscle, and daily pain meds. By the time I turned forty, I was on 240 milligrams of morphine a day and getting over a dozen trigger point injections every eight to twelve weeks.

Then worse got even worse. Between the age of thirty-nine and forty, my metabolism decided to take a permanent vacation. The timing was horrible. My diet consisted of twelve cokes a day, candy, chips, carbs, occasional protein, and very few "green" things. In one year, I gained 42 pounds. Needless to say, my health had deteriorated to the point where I seriously wondered if I would find myself in a wheelchair before I was 50.

Emotionally, I was short-tempered, angry, and irritable. I had a persistent headache, and the side effects of pain meds caused a roller coaster of emotions. All I could manage to do was work and worry and then worry some more.

Physically, I was in horrible shape and was entering my fifteenth year of pain management. I was forty-two pounds overweight, my symptoms were not getting any better, and my tolerance level for pain meds just kept going up. During those fifteen years of pain management, not once did any of my physicians suggest I stop using pain meds and begin physical therapy. They just kept increasing the dosage of my painkillers, addressing the symptom but not the cause.

My Relationships

On top of my bad health, my high-intensity, work-oriented lifestyle was taking its toll on all my other relationships. Between the stress that permeated my personality and the mood swings caused by pain meds, I was living in constant conflict with everyone with whom I had to deal. I had a short temper and was easily angered. I also had developed a well-deserved reputation as a tough negotiator who drove a hard bargain. Because I could argue longer and talk louder, I usually won. But I didn't make many friends in the process.

I knew how to make the other guy cry "uncle" and did so without remorse. After all, this was business, and I saw that as a zero-sum game. For me to win, the other guy had to lose. I didn't hesitate to call in the lawyers—or threaten to do so—when I couldn't get my way otherwise. I essentially bullied my way to victory time and again.

Over 10 years, I spent over tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees just to resolve problems with different parties that probably could have been diffused for next to nothing with a diplomatic phone call or an attentive ear. But I couldn't make that call or take the time to listen (God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason, right?). Even though I had read the scripture hundreds of times, "A soft answer turns away wrath," I wasn't able to put that simple Biblical principle into practice in my life. My stubborn pride stood in the way.

The hardest-hit relationship was my marriage to a woman I dearly loved and adored. Our relationship wasn't where it needed to be, and the reason was all the stress I was bringing into our home. I see this now because hindsight is 20/20, but at the time, I didn't believe it was me. I wanted more from our marriage, and she wanted more, but the ways we were trying to achieve our goals weren't working.

Neither of us was ever unfaithful, nor we had never discussed divorce, but subconsciously, I knew my precious bride wasn't getting what she needed. We had started out aflame with love,

as most newlyweds do. But now, after ten years, the old flame was only flickering, and there were growing tensions between us. I could feel my wife starting to pull away from me, a little at a time. She didn't like what she was seeing in me. She wasn't happy, and I wasn't giving her much of a reason to be happy.

I had become a moody, withdrawn, and unlovable person who was in constant pain. Every aspect of my life was falling apart around me. The more I tried to find balance in my life, the less I had. I felt alone, rejected, and miserable. I knew something had to change radically, and soon. I just didn't know what to do about it or how to do it.

My Slow Drift Away from God

I didn't set out to not let God control my life. I also didn't set out to let God control my life. I set out on life, and, consequently, the older I got, the further I got away from the Lord. My words in public were, "I have faith and love God." Deep down in my heart, though, I knew those were mostly just words, and I needed to cultivate a more committed relationship with Jesus. My relationship with God had become like a distant third cousin in another state. We talked when there was a death or a wedding in the family.

But in the still of the night, I knew I was trying to run my own life instead of letting God direct me. For years and years, I had buried the thought of turning everything over to God because that took something that I wasn't willing to do—admit my way wasn't working. The reality was I had to deal with my pride, and I wasn't ready to do that.

So instead, I rationalized my behavior, procrastinated with excuses, and ultimately always thought, "I'll do that later." I just wasn't quite ready to do something as radical as turn my life over to God for Him to run however He saw fit. My thought process was essentially two-fold:

1. Giving God control meant I wouldn't get to do what I wanted. Looking back on this statement makes

me kind of laugh. My actions and my control were causing me to be miserable, but at that time, my control made perfect sense!

2. Once I got everything I wanted in life, then I would give God control. I thought if I made just a bit more money, then I could spend more time with my family and develop my relationship with God, but the more I made and the bigger my companies grew, the more time I spent away from my family and the more miserably empty I became.

Sure, I had been “praying” now and then, asking God to get me through one business deal after another, or out of one messy jam after another. Looking back at my old journals from 2012 and 2013, I can see how I was struggling to find direction from the Bible.

I thought for a while that I was truly trusting God; I believed I was leaning on Him. But as time passed and things continued to spiral downhill in my stress-filled life, I slowly came to realize that I was just paying lip service to God.

The more I tried to get closer to Jesus, the more I saw how far away I really was. The more I read in the Bible about “trusting in the Lord with all your heart,” the more I realized I was living my life trusting mainly in myself. I had pretty much turned to my own way, hypocritically using God as a sort of fallback safety net when things got too intense for me to handle alone. Usually, I was just vaguely conscious of these inconvenient truths.

I was going to a God “ATM” and trying to withdraw money. When money wouldn’t come out, I was upset with the God “ATM.” I was upset the “ATM” wouldn’t give me money! Why wasn’t He giving me money? Why wasn’t I getting what I wanted?

Well, then it hit me! I hadn’t put in any money—any investments in the God bank. I hadn’t even been working a job to make any money to put into the bank. So, the reason there was

no money in the ATM was 100% my fault.

This was my relationship with God. I hadn't put any time into the relationship, but I kept wondering, "Where is God when I need Him most?"

It got to the point where I felt like I was the "mole" in the county fair game "whack a mole." I would come up with a plan, pop up, and then God would lovingly bump me and say, "You need to do things my way." Boy, was I stubborn. Ego kept me from giving in. I just had to keep doing it my way.

Obviously, I never said a word about any of these problems to my wife. My stubborn pride wouldn't let me. I had to keep up a brave front with her and pretend everything was all right. I needed to convincingly appear as a strong man who had a good relationship with God. I wanted to be right in my arguments and decisions. Surely the issues I was having was because *other* people were not right with God; it wasn't me.

I just couldn't bring myself to admit to my wife that I was not the man of God I needed to be. I was ashamed to admit the truth to her or to anyone else. It was all I could do to admit it to myself, which indeed a real struggle. My pride and arrogance were out of control at this point. I was a prideful, self-centered, egotistical man who was determined to have God on one side of the fence and my life on the other.

My Turning Back

I knew that I desperately needed help in every area of my life, that I needed to turn it all over to God. If I let God, lead He would guide and direct me, but I was struggling to surrender.

Then one day in the fall of 2014, I had an epiphany of sorts while I was reading Proverbs. Honestly, I was just skimming it because I felt guilty for not having a daily devotional, yet God used this time to show me I was a hypocrite.

At that point in my life, the pain and misery had become too much, and as I was reading, I suddenly saw, with perfect clarity, that I was serving myself and my own carnal desires, worshipping

material things and success. I was practicing a contemporary form of materialistic idolatry. I was a saved, religious hypocrite who only wanted God involved when I needed Him.

Then it really hit me—I was going to stand in front of God and give an account for my actions. I would give an account for the testimony I had with others. I would answer for the husband and father I had been. Then another pain hit—my daughter would likely marry the type of man I had become. I was not the man of God that I wanted to be, and I certainly wasn't the man of God I had been created to be. It was time to change.

Over the coming weeks, the Holy Spirit really started to work me over and instead of burying the thought of giving God control I started focusing on the thought. All the things I knew, all the scriptures and words of wisdom I had heard over the years really started to come alive. They started to have more and more relevant meaning.

Then one day in the garage, my heart and spirit broke, and I began to cry. For the first time in my life, I was really moving to give God control of my life. I was moving from the knowing God's word stage to trying to apply it to my life.

For the record, I never cry. I didn't cry as a child when my dog died. Or when my grandparents died. Not when I got married and not when Abigail was born.

But now I was weeping, involuntarily and uncontrollably. This wasn't just a little sniveling pity-party kind of crying, either, but rather great gut-wrenching, heaving sobs that twisted my stomach and racked my whole body and shook my soul and wouldn't quit for hours and left me limp and drained when they finally did stop.

"God, make me the man you want me to be! God, take control!"

That was the cry of my heart that day.

I confessed and repented of every sin I could think of—including the idolatry of worshipping money and the futility of trying to go my own way without letting the Holy Spirit control my life. I tried to get everything off my chest with God that day. Afterwards I truly felt better.

But I knew that I wasn't done yet. I had made things right with God, but I still had to go inside to make things right with my wife. The thought of confessing to her had kept me pinned for years. How could I go to my wife and tell her I wasn't the man of God I proclaimed to be? What would she think? How embarrassing would it be?

I walked into our bedroom crying. "I have a confession to make," I said. "There is something I have to tell you...right now."

I could see the question marks rising in her eyes as she tried to discern where this unexpected, spontaneous confessional from her husband might be going. The tears were rolling down my cheeks.

I was a broken man. I simply stated I was sorry for not being the man of God I had been called to be.

"I have not been the godly husband that I should have been," I said to her between sobs. "I should have been following God and leading my family in His ways. Instead I've been following the ways of the world. But I want to do better, and I have asked God to forgive me and to help me change. I'm asking you to do that, too."

Honestly, the expression on her face said it all—I had lost my mind. She did not know what to make of my tearful confession. It was so completely out of character for me that it took her by surprise, but even if it took me years to prove to her that I was sincere, I determined that I wouldn't give up.

Season of Change

For the next several months, she was understandably skeptical. She watched me closely, waiting to see what I would do next. I realized during this time that she already knew I wasn't the man of God I said I was. Over the years, I had made promises to do better. These promises lasted for a season—a day, a week, a month or maybe even longer—but then I would slip back into my old ways.

However, in the months following this particular tearful confession, she acknowledged and appreciated my sincere desire to give God control of my life, and her vote of confidence greatly encouraged me, as I needed her support. By the same token, she needed to see me stepping up, being a godly husband, and making godly decisions for the family, based not on temporary whims or earthly expediency but on the Word of God.

You see I thought I was alone. I thought I was the *only* Christian struggling to give God control. I quickly found out I wasn't. It amazed me was the reaction I got from other people as I began to make these changes. Because I must confess, I couldn't keep quiet about what was going on in my life. It was all so radical, so transforming, so liberating to finally be following the will of God! I simply had to tell people what I was doing and why. I had no choice. And when I did, almost everyone was moved to open up and start telling me about similar worries and problems — some of them even shedding tears. Friends, business associates, even pastors—everybody was caught in the same trap I had been in! I had no idea how bad the “problem” was, even in the church.

Releasing my worry and stress to God brought physical changes too. Immediately I felt lighter and freer, and the chronic pain in my back started to decrease. This inspired me to make some real, lasting changes. I knew enough was enough. I was “sick and tired of being sick and tired.” That's when I decided to take control of my health and my future. I immediately changed by diet and stopped drinking sodas and eating sugars after 8pm.

Within sixty days, I had lost forty-two pounds. I weaned myself off all pain meds over thirty days and worked hard to manage my pain through physical therapy, exercise, stretching, yoga, dry needling, acupuncture, and a chiropractor. My doctor warned me about the consequences of coming off the meds so fast. She was right. It was bad but well worth it.

This strategy was hard but worked. I was able to manage my pain without the use of pain meds, and I felt better physically and emotionally. Did I hurt at times off pain meds? Yes. Did I

hurt at times when I was on pain meds? Yes. However, I was able to avoid the roller coaster of emotions caused by pain meds, as well as avoid any long-term organ damage. If you can do anything other than pain meds, do it! At first, it's hard, but in the long run, it's *so* much better.

Eventually the changes I was making in my own life, as I sincerely tried to put God first, began to positively affect my spousal relationship. As I released all the pent-up stress in my life and turned it all over to God, the tension between us just started to melt away. I shared my problems and my fears with her, and oftentimes she was the one who came up with the timely solutions we needed.

Surrendering the stress allowed me to be mentally present with my family. You see, for years I had been physically present, but mentally absent. As I started to emerge, I heard my daughter humming. I hadn't heard her hum before and asked my wife when Abigail started humming. She looked at me with a puzzled smile and said, "Nathan, she does it all the time, you are just now hearing it."

Because I was more present, my wife and I began communicating more honestly with each other, sharing our thoughts and feelings more openly, and trusting each other more completely. Sure, we don't have a perfect marriage. Who does? But I'm constantly working on having the best marriage we can have. Sure, I don't have the perfect temperament. Who does? But I'm constantly working on trying to show the love of Christ to others.

What I do have is balance. I have control of my life because I'm allowing God to have control of me, and I strive daily to keep it this way. If you are struggling to find balance, why not give God's way a try? What can it hurt?

Before my journey back to God, I had been, metaphorically, swallowed by the fish, which was absolutely *no* fun. Even though I thought I was more content in the belly of the whale, just as Jonah was, it still wasn't a pleasant place to be. Being in the "belly of a fish" isn't physically or mentally comfortable. It's

hard; it's tough. In Jonah's case he was surrounded by water, wrapped in seaweed, and there was *no* light.

When I turned back to God, I had to deal with *all* the choices I had made, and that included business decisions I had made over the years. Unfortunately, in 2018 these decisions caught up with me, and I had to file bankruptcy. Yes, I could tell you how that person cheated me or how that person lied to me. However, the fact is had I been where God wanted me to be, I wouldn't have been doing business with "those" people. You see, when my focus became money, instead of serving God, I made decisions based on the moment.

Like Jonah, I made the choice to do things my way, and like Jonah I was having to deal with the consequences of *my* actions. God didn't make me make those decisions; I made those decisions all on my own.

So, what's the point of telling you this? Simple. Just because you turn back to God doesn't mean everything is immediately going to be back to normal or comfortable. It doesn't mean you are going to avoid reaping what you have sown, but it does mean when we turn back to God, He's going to be there for us.

Process of Change

Is this process easy? No. It's not easy. Going through a storm is never easy, especially when you know you created your storm.

Just like Jonah, I went through a ton of emotions and thoughts. One moment I was praising God for his deliverance and the next I was asking "Where are you God?" and "Why are you doing this to me?"

These mental struggles are all throughout the Bible, and we will talk more about them later. However, there is hope! There is good news! The longer Jonah was in the belly of the fish, the more humble he became. What did Jonah do? He remembered all the things God had done for him. He started to focus on the goodness of God.

I found this to be extremely helpful in my life. When the self-pity starts to hit me, I start focusing on and remembering all God has done for me. I want to encourage you, stop focusing on your current situation and start remembering what God has done for you.

Fact of life: things change, jobs change, relationships change, our bodies change, and seasons change. However, God never changes. When you apply this to your life it is comforting and consoling. It provides a calming mindset that establishes stability during times of change.

*“To everything there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up
that which is planted;
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
A time to cast away stones,
and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to get, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.”*

(Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)

3

Where Are You with God

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock.”

(Matthew 7:24)

JONAH WAS CALLED TO THE DECK of the ship by the captain. What did the captain want from Jonah? The captain wanted to find out why Jonah was asleep when everyone was about to die. He asked, “O’ sleeper, how can you be asleep when we are about to die!” What did Jonah do? He didn’t answer. He was silent, and he definitely didn’t pray to God.

Do you think God knew exactly where Jonah was? Absolutely! God knew exactly where Jonah was, He knew what he was thinking, and He knew what was in his heart. God knows exactly where you are, what you are thinking, and what’s in your heart. So, why not go ahead and be honest with Him? A good place to start in being honest with Him is addressing where you are in your relationship with God.

Your Walk with God

The first step in this process of turning back to God is to admit where you are with God. Your walk with God is fluid. One moment you are walking in the center of God's will, and the next moment you are drifting, or intentionally walking away, from that same will of God. I believe at any point our walk with God can be labeled as one of five categories. These categories are:

1. Moving Away from God
2. Stumbling Away from God
3. Hindered and Not Moving
4. Moving Towards God
5. On Solid Ground with God

If you are moving away from God, stumbling, or hindered, then you have allowed your sin nature to have dominance over what God intends for your life. I'm a visual person, so each time I find myself in one of these areas, I picture Satan doing the happy dance. He is winning in that moment. My focus is off God, and my actions aren't Christ like. For many years, I was in those categories; I was that "Christian" that people pointed at and said, "Well, if that's a Christian, no thank you." I'm truly embarrassed to say it, but it's true. I wasn't where I needed to be with God.

The fourth category, moving towards God is moving in the right direction, but you still aren't fully committed to giving God full control. You are still riding the fence. What happens when you ride the fence? You get splinters.

The category you want to be in is on solid ground, right in the center of God's will. This is where I always want to be and where God wants us to be. How do you do this? Simple. It's a daily choice to serve God. The hard part is making the right choice everyday.

Our goal should be striving to be on solid ground and if you find yourself moving away from God, or stumbling, or being

hindered, then you must take immediate action to get back on solid ground with God.

Identifying Where You Are with God

Remember, there is no reason not to be 100% honest with God and yourself at this point. God already knows your heart and exactly where you stand with Him, so let's uncover where you are with God by diving deeper into the five categories

1. Moving Away from God

To move away from God means "to change positions, to move, to change, to set in motion, to go from one place to another, to go away from." It's a mental decision to go in a direction opposite of God and His calling on our life.

"We all, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6)

Jonah, David, Samson, the Prodigal Son and many others throughout the Bible made this decision to turn to our own way instead of the Lord's. I've made this decision, and you have made it as well. We knew what we were doing was wrong, but we decided for one reason or another not to stop. James addresses this category by entreating us not just hear the Lord's words, but also act accordingly.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." (James 1:22)

2. Stumbling

Stumbling means "to momentarily lose one's balance, to trip, to fall down." If you are stumbling, then you haven't fully turned your back on God like if you were moving away from Him, but He doesn't have your full attention and surrender. It's like

eating a candy bar one bite at a time over an eight-hour period. We take a bite and then resist the temptation to take another one. Eventually the thought of having another bite wears us down, and we have another bite. We know it's bad for us, but we rationalize that having just a little bit of it can't hurt us; however, the Bible addresses this thought process in James.

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10)

However, have you ever heard the phrase “if you play with fire long enough, you will get burned?” Well, if you play with *sin* long enough, you *will* get burned! Switching back and forth between sin and God's calling won't get you very far. James 1:8 states “A double minded man is unstable in all ways,” In other words, you can't have a true relationship with God while you are still focused on worldly things. You might be reaching for the light at times, but you're still choosing the darkness.

“But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” (John 11:10)

3. *Hindered*

Hindered means “to delay, to obstruct, to prevent from moving forward, to bring to a full stop.” There is active, deliberate sin in your life that keeps you from getting close to God. You may be fully sincere in your desire to follow God's calling, but certain habitual sins, whether known or unknown, are hindering you from drawing closer. It's like a runner attempting to run a race with heavy weights on his arms and legs—so heavy that eventually he's unable to move anywhere.

“Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Hebrews 12:1)

4. Moving Towards God

Moving towards God means we are in “the act of changing positions, to move, to change, to set in motion, to go from one place to another.” You may notice this is the same definition as the first category, moving away from God. This is because the meaning of movement doesn’t change, but the direction does. Every movement we make produces different outcomes, whether it is moving away from God or towards Him.

In this category, we know we aren’t right with God, but we are actively moving towards God. We are digging in and doing the right thing, or at least trying. The ending of the story of the prodigal son is an example of the process of turning back to God, and when he moved back to his father, what happened? His father forgave him and accepted him back.

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20)

The psalms and proverbs also speak to this category of turning back.

“Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” (Psalms 119:133)

“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” (Proverbs 3:6)

5. On Solid Ground

On solid ground means “in God’s will, solid, reliable, guarantee, a rock or boulder, foundation, upon which something stands or is supported, an underlying base or support, the bottom, a fixed place.”

Daily we are striving to make God first in our lives. We are actively applying His word, we have a peace and joy in our lives that is hard to explain, we thank God for His blessings, and we are sensitive to sin.

Luke 6:48-49 describes the man who built his house upon the foundation versus the man who built his foundation upon the earth:

“He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”

The chorus of The Solid Rock sums it up:

On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand:
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.¹

What does being a solid rock do for others? You are a walking billboard. Your every word and every action leads others to a conclusion about what it means to be a Christian. 1 Timothy 4:12 says “be thou an example.”

*What type of example are you?
Where are you in your walk with God?
What ground are you standing on?
Be honest with yourself because God already knows.*

¹ Mote, Rev. Edward. “The Solid Rock. L.M.” The Otterbein Hymnal for Use in Public and Social Worship, edited by Edmund S. Lorenz, 168. Dayton: United Brethren Pub. House, 1891.

The Seesaw of Emotions

Did you identify where you are with God? I hope so! You see, as you start to surrender to God your emotions will start kicking in and if you don't deal with them, they will hold you back.

As I went through this process, I went through numerous emotions. I literally felt like I was on a seesaw. One moment I was riding high and the next moment I was hitting the dirt. One moment I was on fire for God and at total peace and the next moment I was confused, or angry, or frustrated. Sometimes, I was confused, angry and frustrated all at the same time!

Why? Because I'm human and serving God goes against our flesh. The thought of serving God can be downright hard and complicated unless we know what we are facing and know how to deal with it.

Here are the seesaw of emotions I went through:

Confusion

"I've asked God for forgiveness so, where is He? Why am I having to go through this process alone? What does God want from me? Why has He brought me to this place?"

When I was confused, I would focus on the story of Moses at the Red Sea. He had done exactly what God had asked him to do and now he's sandwiched between two mountains, with the Red Sea in front of him and the Egyptians behind him, bearing down on him. I can't even imagine the confusion he must have felt.

Do you feel like Moses? You don't know what to do? Well, do what Moses did. Talk to God and have faith in God's promise to never leave you or forsake you.

Anger

"Why has God abandoned me? Why is He doing this to me? Why hasn't He delivered me from this trial?"

When I was angry, I would focus on the story of Joseph. Joseph had every reason to be angry at God. His brothers betrayed him

and sold him into slavery. Can you imagine how different Joseph would have been had he gotten angry?

I would be very tempted to be angry with God if that had happened to me. So, are you angry with God? Do you believe He has done you wrong? Well, let me encourage you to do what Joseph did. Instead of getting angry and wondering if God has abandoned you, start focusing on honoring and glorifying the Lord like Joseph did.

Frustration

“When I want something, I want it then. I don’t want to wait. I was praying and praying but didn’t feel like God was listening to me or answering me. I didn’t know why I should even continue since it wasn’t working.”

When I was frustrated, I would focus on the story of Gideon. Gideon knew the Lord wanted to use him but he was struggling to trust God. He kept demanding God show him various signs and time and time again God showed Gideon signs.

What are you frustrated with and what are you demanding from God? The sooner you can get to point of trusting God and doing His will, the sooner the frustration goes away.

Peace

“God loves me and cares for me. Everything is going to work out and I’ve never been happier in my life. The peace I have because I know I’m where God wants me is overwhelming.”

When I was at peace, I would focus on the story of Daniel. Daniel served God faithfully and diligently throughout his life without hesitation or care for his personal well-being. He chose to do this and God protected him throughout his life and blessed him for his faithful service.

Are you focusing on serving God faithfully and diligently? I guarantee if you do, your life will be full of peace, joy, contentment and balance.

Are you having a seesaw of emotions?

- It's critical for you to know you are NOT the only one who struggles to give God control.
- It's critical for you to know you are NOT the only one who struggles to serve God.
- It's critical for you to know every Christian is a sinner saved by the grace of God.
- It's critical for you to know it's okay to question God.
- It's critical for you to know it's not OK to keep questioning God.
- It's critical for you to start moving towards God and establish a relationship with God on solid ground.
- It's critical for you to know God loves you and has a plan for you.
- It's critical for you to know it's okay to question God. Yes, you read that right. It's OK to question God. Think about it, Jesus questioned God in the garden of Gethsemane, but Jesus did NOT continue to question God. He questioned God and then moved on and did God's will. It's critical for you to know it's NOT OK to continue to question God.

*Do you want to work on this in your life?
Refer to the Handling Life Program on page 123 to get started.*

Where Are You with God

*Your 5 Daily Devotionals can be found
on pages 130 – 139*

4

Overcoming Mind Games

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

(2 Timothy 1:7)

I HAVE MY ISSUES, AND YOU HAVE YOURS but we have been taught and trained not to share our feelings, not to discuss our thoughts and not to show our emotions.

Listen, sharing your emotions, thoughts and feelings is natural and even Biblical. Look at the life of Jesus. In John 11:35, Jesus openly cried; in Mark 1:41, Jesus was moved with pity; in Mark 3:5, Jesus glared at certain people with anger; in Luke 10:21, Jesus was filled with *joy*; in John 12:27, Jesus discussed his sorrow, and in the garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus prayed to God that if there was any other way please let it be.

“But Nathan, I don’t like dealing with my emotions. I don’t like sharing with others when I am hurting.” Well, if you don’t face your emotions and fears, then you will continue to be miserable, anxious and in constant conflict. Satan will use your

discouragement and fear to keep you where you are in your life, or you can turn back to God and start experiencing the joy and blessings He has promised you.

You have to make a choice—are you going to continue doing things your way or start doing things God’s way?

Still not sure? Please know you are not alone! For years, I thought sharing my struggles would make me appear weak. For years, I thought I couldn’t share my “sins” or struggles with another person because they wouldn’t understand, or maybe they wouldn’t care, or they would judge me, or they would tell others. I let my fears rule my life, and it almost ruined my life.

One of the biggest issues standing in front of us are the “mind games.” You are going to have to make a choice at this point because the constant processing of scenarios will drive you crazy. Know how I know? Because at one point it was literally driving me crazy.

You name it, and I thought it—thoughts that kept me from even trying to give God control, thoughts that helped me “explain” my behavior. Then there were thoughts that came along as I started giving God control. Know what I found out in the end? All these “mind games” were lies and excuses I used to justify my behavior.

If you aren’t careful, these “mind games” can become reality. As you know, when you aren’t walking with God, Satan will play your emotions, thoughts and feelings like a fiddle. The longer he plays the further you back yourself into the corner and when you are in the corner alone it’s a horrible place to be. You are Jonah in the bottom of the boat. You are away from God, you are away from your family and friends, and you aren’t making wise choices. Let’s explore some thoughts, excuses, and mind games that might be holding you back. As we do, identify the “mind games” you are wrestling with and then commit to overcome them.

“What will my spouse think?”

One of the hardest thing you will have to overcome as a married person is admitting to your spouse your faults and asking them to forgive you. Why? Because your pride builds a wall so high that scaling it seems like an impossible task.

When I first considered admitting to my wife that I wasn't the man of God I was supposed to be I had thoughts running through my head like “What will she think? What will she say? How will she respond?” I struggled with these thoughts for years. I knew it would be embarrassing and I knew it would be extremely difficult to do.

Do you know what happened when I finally admitted to my wife I hadn't been the man of God I was called to be? I found out she already knew. She saw how I treated others and she saw I was always stressed, anxious, miserable, and in constant conflict.

When I think back on this matter I'm extremely embarrassed and ashamed. I know my wife wanted to tell me many times that I wasn't right but she couldn't because of my attitude.

Do you think your spouse knows where you are with God? I'm 100% certain they do.

“What are people going to think?”

“I can't tell others what I'm going through. What will they think?” The thought of telling someone I haven't been the Christian I needed to be is embarrassing. Why? Because we believe it's embarrassing to tell others of our mistakes and failures, especially to someone close to us.

Want to know the truth? Everyone around you already knows what type of Christian you are and where you are with God.

Just remember, Every Christian has something (or many things) they are embarrassed about having to admit to others. So, stop worrying about what others think and start focusing on what God thinks.

“I can’t face the consequences!”

When I thought of dealing with the “messes” I created I wanted to crawl in a hole. I honestly didn’t know if I could deal with them. I had had many arguments/discussions with God about how I was justified in my actions and I had the right to do exactly what I did.

I was stalling. I knew what I had to do and had I done things in a timely manner I could have avoided many consequences. You see, the longer you wait to deal with your current situation the more “messes” you are creating.

Think about it this way. You are currently dealing with the consequences of your actions. You are having a hard time dealing with things. Wouldn’t it be easier to deal with consequences knowing God was on your side?

I didn’t owe the person an apology. I even went as far to state if I had it to do over again, I would make sure and do it twice as hard.

Not only did I not want to admit I hadn’t been doing right, but I wanted to crawl into a hole at the thought of dealing with the messes I had created. For years, I had done things my way and the longer you wait to deal with your current situation, the more of a mess you are creating. Part of facing the consequences may require apologizing to those you have wronged. Apologizing can be hard, but in order to come back to God, I had to ask others to forgive me.

Sure, some things are going to be hard and some are going to be embarrassing, but the benefits of living for God will outweigh all the rest. Did you know as soon as you start this process you will wish you had done it years earlier! I did! I wish I had given it all to God in my teens! Oh, the misery and problems I would have avoided.

Need a way to over the consequences? Start focusing on all the good God is doing in your life and start praising God for saving you, for forgiving you and for restoring you!

“I don’t want to forgive others.”

Forgiving someone is one of the hardest things for me to do! When someone has done me wrong, it’s personal, it’s hurtful, and I want vengeance.

While the thought of not forgiving might feel natural and right, this stance is in direct conflict with God’s word. The scriptures make it’s extremely clear that we must forgive others, even if they don’t ask for forgiveness.

I also have no desire to forgive them and restore the relationship. Do you feel the same?

“It’s my money.”

Money isn’t the root of all evils, the love of money is the root of all evils. The issue of money was a stumbling block for me. I “argued” in my mind that if I gave God my money, then I wouldn’t have enough money to pay my bills or go on vacation.

I mean, how was I supposed to do the things I wanted to do if I gave my money to God? Right? It’s sad how my “compelling arguments” at the time made so much sense.

At that point in my life, I was defined by material things, and I was trying to find my happiness in material things. I was totally focused on how I was going to maintain my lifestyle. This was the lifestyle which was leading to my stress, anxiety, misery and conflict.

Do you know what happened as I started to give God control? My focus started to change. I started to focus on the things of God and not on money. My security moved from being in money and material things to being in God and His promises.

Do you believe your money is your money? Do you believe if you can make more money then you’ll be able to spend time with God and your family? Well, be honest, how’s it working out for you?

I’ve been there and I know it doesn’t work. You aren’t spending time with God and you aren’t spending quality time

with your family. You can't even go on vacation without being stressed out about money.

"I'm only serving God to get His blessings."

When I started turning back to God the oddest thing happened. When I would start to pray or read God's word I would start having immense guilt. I would start having thoughts of the only reason I'm serving God is to get His blessings.

It really started to nag me and I developed a "fear" which started to consume me and it made praying and studying God's word hard.

Don't worry. Your thoughts are common but they aren't supported by God's Word. When I was studying God's word it hit me. God has promised me, in His word, that if I serve Him, love Him and honor Him, He will bless me.

"Serve the LORD your God, and He shall bless thy bread,
and thy water." (Exodus 23:25)

Don't let the thought of serving God for His blessings hold you back. Instead, focus on serving God for His blessings. The scriptures are full of what God will do for you when you are serving him.

"I've wasted so much time."

For a long time, I looked back over my life with regret, seeing how I should have been serving God. These thoughts of regret kept me in limbo with God for quite sometime. You see, regret essentially paralyzes you, it keeps you from making a move.

Thankfully, it doesn't matter how much time we have wasted because God is a God of restoration and redemption. It's time to stop regretting the past and start focusing on the present. It's time to start living for God and setting an example for others to see.

“I’ve gone too far.”

Having the thought of “you’ve gone too far” and God doesn’t want you back is one I dealt with for many years. I had literally convinced myself of this. I told myself that I had made too many bad decisions and life choices and I just knew there was no way God would ever want me back.

I knew my thoughts weren’t accurate and I knew God would forgive me and restore me. So, why did I have these thoughts? And why do you have these thoughts?

Simple. It’s an excuse. Nothing more and nothing less. We are convincing ourselves God doesn’t want us back. This means we don’t have to deal with our sin. It’s a weak argument but a strong one when you are dealing with it.

Please know that no matter what you’ve done or where you are, God wants you back NOW. You haven’t gone too far from God. God loves you, wants a relationship with you, and wants you to use you for to reach others with the gospel.

Think about this:

- Noah was a drunk
- Abraham was old
- Isaac was a daydreamer
- Jacob was a liar and a thief
- Leah was unattractive
- Joseph was betrayed by his family
- Moses had a stuttering problem
- Gideon was afraid
- Samson was a womanizer
- Rahab was a prostitute
- David was an adulterer and murderer
- Elijah considered suicide

- Jonah ran from God's calling
- Naomi was a widow
- Peter denied Christ
- The disciples slept instead of praying
- Martha worried about everything
- Mary Magdalene was demon-possessed
- Zacchaeus was small
- Timothy had an ulcer
- Paul was once Saul, a Christian killer

Every one of these individuals had *major* issues or made *serious* mistakes. Their shame, embarrassment, and poor choices could have dictated their future, but they sought God's forgiveness, or God's love, or God's help.

God didn't let those things stand in the way. He still loved them and used them for His purposes!

"I Can't Tell God"

I can't tell God what I've done because what will He think of me? Have you ever had that thought before? I have and it's a powerful and scary one.

Well, there isn't anything you can tell God that He doesn't already know and the moment He sent His son to die on the cross for you and me He knew ALL your sins and ALL my sins.

Think about that. God knows everything about you and He still loves you and He is waiting for you to develop a relationship with Him. It's time to start talking to God about everything going on in your life.

"I'm overwhelmed."

The moment you consider the consequences of your actions you are going to feel overwhelmed. The thought of dealing with your actions is sobering and extremely humbling. It can lead to

feeling trapped and unable to see a way out.

What did Jonah do when he was running from God? He slept because he was probably overwhelmed and depressed.

Don't let the feeling of being overwhelmed or depressed hinder you from being the person God has called you to be. Take these feelings to God and if you feel like you can't handle it then seek the advice and help of a medical doctor.

Do you ever rationalize your behavior?

Rationalizing Our Behavior

It's quite simple to ride the coattails of rationalizing our behavior. Why? Because it allows us to make excuses for why we don't need to change and it allows us to convince ourselves we were right.

You see, when we suffer from the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome, we have to continually make excuses for our actions and our behavior. These "excuses" are dangerous because they keep us from facing reality. When you don't face reality it keeps you from achieving a relationship with God. Then when you don't achieve a relationship with God you won't achieve a life of joy, peace, contentment and balance.

Think about these stories:

Adam and Eve rationalized they had the right to eat of any tree they wanted. Did they have that right?

Samson rationalized he had the right to kill thirty Philistines because he had been betrayed over a riddle. Did he have that right?

Moses killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew brother. Did he have that right?

What do all of these examples have in common? Each and everyone of them rationalized their behavior and ultimately

convinced themselves their actions were justified. However, in God's eyes their actions were wrong and they suffered for their decisions. Do you know what else happened? Their actions caused to others to suffer who had nothing to do with the situation.

When you are suffering from the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome, you will be tempted to continue your habit of rationalizing and making excuses. Want to know something that helps me resist rationalization and making excuses?

I've started considering and focusing on who is being affected by my actions and decisions. The first people who come to mind are my wife and my daughter. I don't want them to suffer because of my decision to not do things God's way.

Below are some of the rationalizations I've struggled with in my life. Some I've been able to overcome and some I struggle with today. As you read through these, think about the "excuses" or rationalizations you are using.

"But I'm a good Christian."

Truth—I was, by worldly standards. I was a model citizen. You might be in this position as well. The problem is "good" Christians are entirely different than godly Christians. Being good doesn't count in God's eyes. He wants us to surrender our heart to Him, obey Him and answer the calling He has placed on our lives.

"But I give God money."

Truth—I did, but only after my personal needs were met. The Bible calls us to tithe on our first fruits—not give what's left over after we take care of ourselves. God doesn't need our money, the streets in heaven are paved with gold! God wants our heart. He wants us to make Him first and depend upon Him for our needs.

“But I’m not ashamed of God or Jesus.”

Truth—I wasn’t. I never shied from telling others I had a personal relationship with Jesus. However, I wasn’t actively showing the love of Christ to others and I wasn’t actively trying to share the gospel with others. I wasn’t living a passionate life for Jesus. At times, my temperament and personality didn’t line up with God’s word.

“But I read my Bible.”

Truth—at Christmas, Easter, and the occasional Proverb here and there. But I didn’t have an active relationship with God and I wasn’t yearning to learn more about Him. I know the benefits I’ll get from studying God’s word daily, but I still struggle to do it. If I knew there was a thousand dollars on my porch every morning, I would go downstairs every morning and pick up the money. Wouldn’t you?

“But I pray.”

Truth—when I wanted to thank God for my meal, or ask him to deliver me from a situation, or ask him to provide for a need. I’ve realized to have a strong relationship with God, I must have open and honest communication with Him. My prayers must be real and sincere, not ceremonial.

“But I’m a good spouse.”

Truth—I was a good spouse. I had a good job and I wasn’t out cheating on her or out getting drunk. However, the *real* truth was I wasn’t leading my wife spiritually and I wasn’t being a loving and attentive husband. As you know, there is a *huge* difference between being good and being godly.

“But I’m a good father.”

Truth—to a degree. I was around physically and I provided for my daughters physical needs. The *real* truth was that I was not having devotions with my daughter, I was not having a nightly prayer with her, and I was not setting a good example for her. Being mentally and emotionally present is critical to be a good parent.

“But I’m a good businessman.”

Truth—I was an ethical and legal businessman from an earthly standpoint. The *real* truth was people often complimented me and said I would make an excellent attorney. I could argue and push until I got my point across because my focus was on myself and my circumstances. I may have been a good businessman, but I wasn’t a godly one, and as we discussed earlier, good without godly isn’t enough.

All of my rationalization lead to excuses about why I didn’t need to change and every one of these excuses don’t line up with what the Bible says about living a Christ-centered life.

When Jonah allowed his rationalization to deter him from God’s path, a whole city was neglected. I beg of you, don’t let your mind games and rationalization keep you from seeking out a daily relationship with God. Question, are your mind games, rationalizations and excuses showing others what God has done for you?

Do you know what’s one of the best way to tell others of Jesus Christ?

To show them what Jesus has done for you! Be a walking billboard of God’s mercy and grace. I Timothy 4:12 states “be thou and example.”

Find Someone to Talk With

You are at a pivotal point right now. Instead of listening to excuses in your mind or rationalizing your behavior, it's time to find someone who can listen to you, help you and who speak God's truth to you.

Someone who knows God's word and is willing to be honest, open and vulnerable with you. It's time to buckle down and decide your path. You are either going to give God's way a chance and give Him control or you are going to turn your back on God and follow your flesh.

I can say with 100% certainty that every knee jerk reaction I've ever made turned out to be the wrong decision. When we are backed into a corner the worst thing to do is make a knee jerk reaction to resolve our current situation.

*Do you want to work on this in your life?
Refer to the Handling Life Program on page 123 to get started.*

Overcoming Mind Games
*Your 5 Daily Devotionals can be found
on pages 140 – 149*

5

Dealing with Pride

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

(Proverbs 16:18)

JONAH HAD A PRIDE PROBLEM. His pride clouded his judgment and led him to believe he knew better than God. His pride led him to make choices that pulled him further away from God and kept him from being humble. As Jonah discovered, one of the most important steps to giving God control is dealing with your pride. To deal with your pride you must first confess you have problem with it. This was my sticking point for many years.

The Fall is Hard

For years, my fruit and tree didn't match up. I said I was a strong Christian and loved the Lord, but my actions and words told another story. My obsessive hard work and stress was eroding the foundation of my self-esteem, my relationship with my family, and I was fighting internally about giving God control of my life.

What kept me from changing? My pride, my arrogance, my ego, and my self-centeredness. This resistance almost destroyed me. It was like I was walking down the train tracks and saw the train coming in the distance but did nothing; the voice in me was starting to scream, and it was getting louder and louder. You see, down deep I knew exactly what I needed to do. The Holy Spirit was working overtime to get me where I needed to be.

What I didn't realize at the time was this "attitude" of mine had started having adverse effects on all aspects of my life. It was causing small ripples at first but was quickly becoming strong waves. It was throwing my life out of balance. The mind games discussed in the previous chapter kept me pinned down. Satan was telling me I had gone too far to come back to God, and I didn't want to have to admit to myself, much less others, that I wasn't where I was supposed to be as a man of God.

The fear of change and the fear of having to face consequences was driving me deeper and deeper into the life I had created. I had convinced myself it was easier for me to stay on the slippery slope I was on than admitting to God I needed him. I didn't know what a life looked like that was fully surrendered to God, because my pride had kept me from even trying.

Pride and My Wife

One of the first opportunities I had to deal with my pride was in my relationship with my wife. Over the years, I was so consumed with other thoughts and anxiety when I was supposed to be spending time with her that our relationship began to suffer. I had not been attentive to my wife's needs, and I knew I needed to make it right, but that required me to admit I had been wrong. To do that I knew I had to get right with God. I couldn't just flip a light switch and "turn" God on in my life. It was going to take diligence, and I wasn't yet willing to do that. I needed to make my wife feel loved and appreciated, but instead of doing that, I believed I first needed my wife to appreciate me and give me a "pat on the back" for providing for our family, yet it seemed like the more I worked and the more we did things, the

more strain there was. For example, if I wasn't home at 6pm for dinner, my wife would call, and an argument would entail. She was frustrated because I wasn't home. I was frustrated that she didn't understand why I had to work. It wasn't like I was at a bar getting drunk!

Since I took steps in October 2014 to change my walk with God, our arguments over my work schedule or her timing of dinner have become mute points. Why? Because the issue wasn't really about work or dinner. What my precious wife was really saying when she called me was that she loved me and missed me. She was crying out that she wanted to be number one in my life, not number two to my work. She wanted me to listen to her when she called, and she wanted me to spend quality time with her when we were together.

This is a key component to overcoming the Modern-Day Jonah Syndrome. You must stop addressing symptoms of the problem.

You must identify the root issue and address that issue.

That's the ONLY way to resolve the symptoms.

As I turned back to God, we genuinely connected, and she became a true priority in my heart. We still have some "discussions" about life, work, money, raising our daughter, but the underlying communication is different, meaning we are actually communicating. We are talking *to* each other and not *at* each other. Our communication is meaningful and most of the pettiness and useless arguments are gone.

These arguments could have been avoided had I applied the principle of putting my wife's needs before mine. Now that I strive to make my wife number one in our relationship, do you want to know what has happened? All those words of appreciation and those little pats on the back that I so desperately wanted come often and frequently. Know what else happened? The romance in our marriage is stronger than when we first got married. All because I laid my pride down.

Neglecting Our Evangelistic Responsibility

In addition to affecting our relationships, pride also causes us to neglect our evangelistic responsibility, just as Jonah did.

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me.” (Jonah 1:2)

God told Jonah to go and “cry out against” the wickedness in Nineveh. Yet Jonah ignored God’s calling and went the other way. Think about it though—without God, these people were dying and going to hell, right? How many didn’t hear the gospel because Jonah didn’t “feel” like doing what God had called him to do?

Well, I’ll have to admit I’m as guilty as Jonah. I’ve felt the Holy Spirit tug on me to go speak to someone, to simply ask them how they are doing, and I didn’t do it. My pride would cause me to feel embarrassed or tell me that I had more important things to do with my time. It was my pride that kept me so focused on my own life that I didn’t feel like discussing their problems.

At times to soothe my conscious I would “pat” someone on the shoulder and tell them they simply needed to get in God’s word and pray. And that is where it ended. Very sad. Where are you in sharing your faith? When is the last time you shared your faith? Not “Jesus Loves You” faith or “I’m praying for” faith, but real faith, real passion for the things God has done for you?

*When is the last time you listened to someone
who was struggling with a problem?*

*When is the last time you followed up with someone
to see how things are going in their life?*

You see, to reach someone with the gospel we must be able to show them the love of Christ. What’s the only way you can show love to someone? I’m talking about genuine love? The type of

love needed when someone has done you wrong, or you disagree with their politics, or they cut you off on the way to work.

This love comes from God and the only way to show it to others is by having a relationship with God.

The Urging

Let me share something that happened to one Saturday morning. I stopped at a gas station to get a drink, and as I was walking in, I got that urging—the one where the Holy Spirit is encouraging me to ask someone how they are doing and if there’s anything I can pray with them about.

Honestly, I didn’t want to do it. I was hot and thirsty from being at the gym, but I did it. Did I have the best attitude about it? Nope, but as I started to say, “Hello, how are you doing?”, the gentleman turned around and said, “Hey, you’re Nathan Tabor. I watch your videos online, and it’s a real encouragement to me.”

We stood there and talked about the Lord for a few minutes and then went our separate ways. I learned something at that moment. At times, the urging can be used to encourage someone *or* God can use it to encourage me. To see a random stranger, in a parking lot, who tells me how much God has used me in his life, is *very* uplifting. I needed to hear it.

So, I’m going to try and be more diligent about following the leading of the Holy Spirit, and I encourage you to do the same. We never know what God has planned or what blessing He has in store for us!

*If you feel God urging you to do something—
don’t hesitate, don’t delay, don’t make excuses—DO IT!*

Hiding Your Reality

Pride keeps us from dealing with our problems. Have you ever found yourself going through your day, acting like everything is fine, yet internally you are a mess? We think by ignoring issues, they will somehow just go away, and we won’t have to deal with

them straight on. We believe it will be our own personal miracle, one more-hard situation we didn't have to go through because God took care of it for us.

Maybe some things God will take care of, because it wasn't something that we were to deal with ourselves to begin with, but you and I both know the difference between the problems we weren't supposed to deal with and the ones we avoid out of fear of facing our own insufficiencies.

There was a point in my life I refused to acknowledge my weakness or fears. Underneath my external veneer of entrepreneurial confidence and success, I was really a nervous wreck, plagued by spontaneous, unpredictable panic attacks. The pressures in my life, mostly at my own doing, were building to an explosive level. Anxiety and stress ruled most of my days, but admitting that would show weakness. So, I kept it all to myself, not realizing at the time the toll it was having on me and those closest to me.

When confronted with my shortcomings, I always said I just couldn't put my finger on it. The reality was I didn't want to put my finger on it. I didn't want to deal with the reality of my situation. Deep down, I knew I wasn't being honest with myself or God. I kept moving forward with projects and deal I should have passed on. Pride would tell me that I was being presented with these opportunities because God was blessing me or because I deserved them.

It took all my strength to admit I couldn't handle it my circumstances by myself. My pride and arrogance were out of control. I was a prideful, self-centered, egotistical man who was determined to have God on one side of the fence and my life on the other. I wanted God in my life but I wanted Him on my terms and when I needed Him to help me or bless me.

Have you ever been there? Are you there now?

Are you in over your head? Do you feel like no matter what you do things aren't getting better? If so, then you need to

consider the fact that you might be hiding your reality as well.

Signs Pride Is Controlling You.

First, you strive to be the best no matter the cost.

Have you ever seen a foot race? Two little kids running as hard as they can, and with just ten feet left, one kid pushes the other to the ground! The one falls while the other crosses the finish line with his arms held up in victory. Yes, he won, but because he broke the rules to win, he really lost.

As we grow up, we typically grow out of physically pushing others down, but we don't always grow out of emotionally pushing others down. We don't grow out of the desire to win, to be first. It can consume us. When we are not humble before the Lord and are overly involved in our work, we tend to become very proud of our achievements. We want to be "the best," and that means we will do anything to be the best.

Second, you easily get angry, frustrated, or irritated.

When we have a problem with pride, our fuse is short, very short! It doesn't take much to set us off, whether it's the waitress who's a few minutes late with waters or a spouse who is simply trying to ask a question. Pride causes us to easily be in a bad mood and respond to others in a grouchy manner. Simply put, we are not very pleasant people to be around when we are filled with pride.

To make matters worse, pride leads us to believe that nothing is ever our fault. When confronted about our harsh behavior, we excuse it by blaming the other person. We use the argument that had the other person done their job right, then we wouldn't have had to get upset.

Third, you are selfish.

This is a telltale sign of being out of balance with God. We can't admit it, but we do what we want to do. Our pride puts blinders on us and we put our own needs before the needs of others. We ignore our family, our friends and we ignore God.

We spend a great amount of time convincing ourselves that everything we do is for others, but our actions and words tell a different story. Essentially, if we aren't being praised for our efforts we aren't doing it, because pride always makes sure we are #1.

Laying Down your Pride

Does any of that sound familiar? If those signs resonate with you, then it might be time to start working on laying down your pride and giving God control.

When I first had this thought it scared me. The thought of giving God control wasn't an issue I took lightly. I just knew if I gave God control of my life, then I wouldn't be in charge anymore. The thought of living life as a true believer honestly sounded boring to me and it seemed like a life of do's and don'ts, filled with laws and regulations.

Boy, was I wrong! The fact of the matter is simple.

The more control I give to God the more control I get.

I bet you're asking, "Nathan, I don't understand how giving God control of my life get me more control?" I'm here to tell you it does. I'm walking proof of it. I know. It doesn't make sense until you have experienced it. So, let me tell you how it worked out in my life.

For years and years, I wanted control of my life. I wanted to be able to relax and hang out with my family without the persistent stress. I had my priorities out of order—I had myself first most of the time. I occasionally put God first and even occasionally put my wife first, but overall, I was a self-centered, prideful man, and I used money to try to gain control. My thought was simple: if I had money, I could solve all my problems, thus freeing up my time for my family, but the more money I made, the worse my life got, and the more control I lost.

The dilemma with the belief that money can solve your

problems is illustrated in a conversation I had in 2006 with a friend who had sold his company for \$900 million cash. In the most intelligent voice and tone I could muster up, I asked him what he would do if he had it all to do over again. I was thinking that he was going to impart some amazing wisdom on me and as he turned to me his eyes were filled with tears. He said, “my daughter is fifteen, and my son is thirteen and they both have \$135 million in their trust account, *but* I don’t know them. I so wish I had spent more time with them when they were growing up.”

WOW! Here’s a Christian man who loves the Lord and has more money than he will ever need, but having money didn’t resolve his problem, nor could it resolve his problem.

How many times have you said or heard someone say, “If I just made more money, I’d be happier”? Or how about “Once I make more money, I’ll spend more time with my family”?

Well, I’ve got bad news for you. Money itself *never* made anyone happy. The choices a person makes with their money can contribute to their happiness and you can even purchase happy moments, but simply having money will NOT resolve any of your problems.

*If you think money will give you more time to spend with God,
it won't.*

*If you think money will give you more time to spend
with your family, it won't.*

*If you think money will give you more time to spend on your health,
it won't.*

If you think money will solve your problems, it won't.

The pursuit of making money will result in less time with God, less time with loved ones, it will effect your health, and it

WILL definitely create more problems. If you don't spend time with God now and your family now before you have money, you won't spend time with your family after you have money.

Money was how I tried to control my life, However, I know this isn't how everyone tries to control their lives. There are plenty of other ways like having a jam-packed schedule, being a perfectionism, climbing the corporate ladder, shopping til you drop, or being a conasore of food. However, the principle is universal—whatever you are doing to control your life will end up controlling you.

My first few attempts at surrendering control looked like bargaining: "God, if I do this for you, then I need you to do this for me..." Have you ever tried bargaining with God? Oh, if I had a dollar for every time I've tried that, I would be retired. I wanted to ensure God was going to take care of me before I stepped out and tried doing things His way.

I was saying to God, "hey God, I'll read my Bible, I'll pray and I'll even start going to church, but I need you to resolve this matter if I do that." Here's the odd thing. I was bargaining with things I should have already been doing. Ultimately, bargaining with God isn't actually giving Him control.

In order to truly surrender, I knew I had to began taking the word of God and *applying* it in my life. You see, knowing God's word isn't the same as applying it. Because when applied to one's life, God's Word actually facilitates what you have wanted and strived for so dearly but couldn't achieve on your own. (see chapter on Wisdom Matters)

That's the secret to giving God control. It's not a complicated process when you consider what's required per God's word. It only becomes complicated when we make it complicated.

When I started to apply God's word to my life, I started to get control of my life and I've found the more I surrender to God, the more joy, contentment and freedom I have as well.

From a human standpoint, this makes no sense.

As I sit here and type it out, it makes no logical sense from a human perspective. All I can say is it's 100% truth and God's word even backs my statement up. I'm living proof that it works.

Are you tired of your current situation?

Do you want joy, contentment and freedom?

Do you want a better relationship with your spouse?

Do you want a better relationship with your kids?

Then you must deal with your pride and surrender to God and His will for your life..

How to Know God's Will

"How do I know the will of God?" Great question! It's a questions every Christian asks and I spent years wondering the same thing.

However, this isn't a topic we should complicate. We shouldn't overthink it and we shouldn't automating assume God wants us to move to Africa.

So, how do you know God's will? It's simple. Get to know God by developing your prayer life and by getting into His Word. Every day you should study God's word and apply it to your life because *God's word is God's will*.

God's word *will* give you comfort in your need and God's word *will* give you direction in your life.

Here's a practical way I know God's will for my life, and it's a really simple process. Whenever I'm praying about a specific situation or decision, I ask myself, "Nathan, does it lead you closer to God? Or does it lead you away from God?" If it leads me closer to God, it's His will. If it leads me away from God, it's not His will.

If I can't find clarity on my own, then I sit down with another believer and ask them for advice.

Here's a Biblical way to know the will of God. When you read God's word what do you find? You find things like share the gospel, love others, studying God's word, fellowship with other believers, forgive others, have a grateful heart, pray without ceasing, care for those in need, and much more.

As you read God's word, talk with God about your decision. Ask Him for wisdom and clarity. Consider this, "Does your choice lead you closer to God? Or does it lead you away from God?" If it leads you closer to God, go for it!

You see, God knows if our hearts are right then our actions will be glorifying to Him. If we are seeking to serve God then doing His will isn't a bunch of do's and don'ts, it's a lifestyle that comes with benefits like joy, contentment, peace and harmony NO matter what is going on in our lives.

Make the Choice and Don't Delay

Now you know the will of God, so don't delay in applying it! Sometimes our pride causes us to procrastinate because we don't want to lay it down and do what we know God has called us to do. I stayed in this stage for years. Procrastination is a slow death. It's like putting a frog into a pot with cold water and turning the heat on low. Because the temperature change is slow and gradual, the frog doesn't notice he is being cooked. Don't let procrastination be that slow burn in your life that leads to devastation.

For years, every time the thought of serving God came up, I dismissed it or buried it. You know exactly what I mean. The thought of "I'll do it at some point" allows us to move on and "get over" the guilt we are experiencing. However, I have to warn you, when we delay serving God, we miss out on His blessings He has planned for us, and we create problems that could have been avoided.

Why do we do this? Pride. Left unchecked, it controls our lives and causes us to convince ourselves all is well in our lives or we can deal with the matter at another time. It literally causes us to make bad choices and is a powerful force in our lives.

Look at the story of Peter. Peter loved Jesus immensely but do you know what Peter did when he was confronted and asked if he was with Jesus? He denied Christ not once, not twice, but three times. Why? Because Peter was a sinner who struggled with his pride just like you and me. He let his pride control him in that moment. Did Peter stay in that mindset? No. He admitted his sin, asked for forgiveness and then went to work spreading the gospel.

Remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? They had a huge choice to make. They could go with the flow, fitting right in with society, and live, or they could do what was right and die. It would have been very easy for them to deny God and protect themselves but they didn't.

You see, the human mind wants us to believe that if we do what's best for us personally it will always be the best outcome for us. While that might make sense in our mind it rarely ever works out that way. Do you see the difference between Peter and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Peter choose his own best interest and it caused him major grief but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego chose to depend on God.

If you don't read another word, *please* know it's time to start giving God control, not later today, or tomorrow, or next week, but *now*. Remember the seesaw of emotions we discussed earlier? As deal with your pride, you are going to have a seesaw of emotions and you will need to keep going though. Don't let fear stop you, don't quit, don't procrastinate because on the other side of that seesaw, on the other side of your pride, is freedom in Christ.

Overcoming Fear with Faith

In addition to procrastination, fear also keeps us from dealing with our pride—fear of what others think of us, fear of what God thinks of us, and fear of surrendering control. So, one massive step in overcoming pride is overcoming fear. To overcome fear, you must develop your faith. Faith is the key to success and victory in the Christian life and fear is the opposite.

The bedrock truth of the Christian religion is the doctrine that “the just shall live by faith.” Those six short words are so powerful that they have changed the course of history more than once. Martin Luther cited that Scripture (Romans 1:17, derived from Habakkuk 2:4) to jumpstart the Protestant Reformation. In fact, faith is so important that Hebrews 11:6 declares,

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

Faith is the essential component of a successful Christian life. Faith implies a strong, settled confidence in God’s goodness and faithfulness. Faith is a firmly entrenched trust that God is dependable and reliable and honest. Faith allows us to rest secure in our identity as sons and daughters of God, regardless what others may think of us.

Technically speaking, the opposite of faith is unbelief. But in practical terms, the opposite of faith is fear. Fear is a lack of confidence, a lack of settled assurance, a lack of trust in the goodness and reliability and integrity of God.

Faith vs Fear

Faith tells us that it doesn’t matter what other people think of us because God loves us.

- Fear tells us we are bound to what other people think of us.

- Faith reminds us that laying down our pride means walking in peace as we fully trust in our Heavenly Father.
- Fear wants us to believe that holding on to our pride means that we will get what we want.
- Faith allows us to trust God's word and give Him control of our lives.
- Fears tells us we must control our lives if we want to have the life we want.

When we are walking in fear, we are not walking in faith. Fear does not come from God, as the Scripture plainly attests. In 2 Timothy 1:7, Apostle Paul states,

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.”

So, there is a dynamic tension between faith and fear, between trust and unbelief. When a person is worried and anxious all the time, and always stressed out by the events of everyday life, he is walking in fear and unbelief.

I'll be honest: faith is tough. I so want to put my faith and trust in God, and I constantly try to do it. That to me is the real deal. Faith isn't like turning on a light switch. Striving to have faith is a moment-by-moment action. I look back over the years and see the things God has done for me! I see where He has protected me and provided for me. I see where He has moved mountains for me. By focusing on God's past actions in my life, it feeds my faith, which helps me to overcome my fear. As I overcome my fear, it paves the way for me to lay down my pride and overcoming pride is a huge mountain to overcome.

So, how is that for faith moving mountains?

We Get the Respect We Give

One of the fruits that comes from dealing with your pride is that your ability to show others respect grows and, consequently, more respect is shown to you. See, respect is a two-way street. There's a lot of advice out there about how to be more assertive, how to set healthy boundaries, and how to "demand" respect. The trouble with *demanding* respect is that any respect given at that point isn't genuine. So, true respect is earned by giving respect to others.

In our current culture of "me first" and hiding behind technology to say whatever we want, respect is becoming more rare. We often feel like we're not getting the respect we want, or think we deserve, from our others—our spouse, co-workers, etc. The answer isn't acting tough or being clever enough to persuade them to show us more respect. The answer is in asking ourselves a pretty basic question—have we shown respect first?

Probably not, right? Answering "no" doesn't mean you treat others like garbage, but it does mean you haven't gone the extra step, which is the difference between a mediocre relationship and a great one. When we lay down our pride and give God control, our eyes open to see more opportunities to honor and lift up others. We are no longer looking out for ourselves; we realize there's people around us who have the same wants and needs that we do. This awareness should drive us to take that extra step in our relationships, and suddenly our relationships are no longer mediocre—they are great! If you want a better relationship with your spouse, your coworkers, your boss, show them respect!

We need to also remember that character means giving respect out of a pure heart, not simply as a means to be respected in return. What do I mean by that? Well, when we are seeking respect, we often expect acknowledgment and praise when we do things. We've all been there. You do your spouse a favor or help them out in some way, and they don't seem grateful or appreciative. It's human nature to want them to acknowledge

what you did. But if we only help our spouse in order to receive acknowledgment and praise for our actions, then we've only done it for ourselves. That's not true respect.

What's the solution to this issue? When you do something for your spouse, do it as unto the Lord. Do it because it's the right thing to do. God says we should be the type of people who honor and respect others, so when you show respect, do it as unto the Lord. Do it because they, as children of God, are worthy of respect. This is where pride truly begins to die.

To close this chapter on pride, I want to leave you with one more fruit that comes with laying down our pride—wisdom, which we will talk about more in chapter 8.

“When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.” (Proverbs 11:2)

Action Steps to Overcome Pride

Repent of Your Pride

The hardest thing for a prideful person to do is admit they're wrong and repent of the sin of pride, ask God for forgiveness and then seek forgiveness and reconciliation with others.

Your View of God

God created us from dust. He knows every sin you've done and will do, yet He still sent His son to die on the cross for you and me. It's time to start praising Him and worshiping Him. It's time to start recognizing what God has done for you and it's time to stop feeling like God has abandoned you.

Listen to Others

Listening to others allows you opportunity to receive constructive feedback on your behavior and the only way someone can truly listen is by setting their pride aside. When you aren't listening to

others your pride is deceiving you and you are blinded to your actions and words.

Focus on God, not Yourself

Focus on giving God the glory for the great things He has done in your life. By focusing on your relationship with God you won't have time to focus on yourself. You achieve this focus by developing and maintaining your devotional life, your prayer life and fellowship with other believers.

Pray for Humility

Praying for humility is biblical and shows God you love Him and respect Him. Ask God to search your heart and reveal every part of your life where pride has taken over. Then pray to God for the wisdom and strength to conquer pride in your life.

Practice Humility

Make the choice to be humble. While you will never be able to fully escape the temptation to be prideful you can definitely work on practicing humility.

Remember the Consequences

For every action there is a reaction. The consequences of pride is bondage which literally means you are a slave to sin and it controls every aspect of you.

*Do you want to work on this in your life?
Refer to the Handling Life Program on page 123 to get started.*

Dealing with Pride

*Your 5 Daily Devotionals can be found
on pages 150 – 159*

6

Dealing with Forgiveness

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”

(2 Chronicles 7:14)

WHEN LOOKING AT JONAH’S PROCESS of turning back to God, we see that even after he obeyed God’s directions, he struggled to forgive the Ninevites, though God freely forgave them. Jonah’s story wasn’t over after he left the belly of the whale; God still had to teach him about forgiveness. Why?

Because forgiveness is *hard, hard, hard* but a critical step in turning back to God! If you don’t forgive others, it will literally eat you up. This is what happened to me. I slowly started to become exactly what I said I always despised. You know that person, right? The one who can barely give a real smile, who is always grumpy and hard on others. The seed of bitterness had

taken root in my heart and my brain, and the more I internalized hurt and focused on the pain the more I fertilized that seed. To the point, it was a full-grown oak tree!

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.” (Hebrews 12:15)

When you have this burden in you, it makes you weak. It takes your focus away from God and places it on things you aren't equipped to handle. As this happens, we open the door to Satan.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” (1 Peter 5:8)

Have You Been Wronged?

Has a family member, friend or business partner ever burned you or done you wrong? That feeling of betrayal is a hard pill to swallow, especially when it comes from someone close to you. They say that time heals all wounds, but I've had a few wounds that, over time, got worse. The pain and hurt continued to grow. The more time that passed, the more that bitterness grew.

At the time, I didn't think much about it. And when those thoughts arose, I just let it go—or at least tried to, but I would find myself wanting to make a business successful just to prove someone else wrong ... to show someone that I wasn't what they said I was. I wasn't a failure, I had worth to my life. I found myself daydreaming about how to get back at someone, or how to sue them. I wanted to make them feel the same pain that they had caused me!

Just to give you some examples of wrongs I have had to forgive, here are a few things that have happened to me over the years:

- A former employee embezzled hundreds of thousands of dollars from my business.
- A former apartment manager, who was also a pastor, embezzled \$16,620 dollars of rent.
- A former candidate for the U.S. Senate, who was also a pastor, never paid the invoice for the website I built him.
- A former candidate for president never paid the invoice for the consulting I provided.

I could write a book about what others have done to me and how it hurt me, my family or my business professionally, personally or financially, and I am 100% positive you could do the same, right? Then it hit me, and honestly, I didn't like it, but I had to face it. I had to address the wrong I had done to others as well.

Have You Wronged Others?

In 2014, I stopped and thought for a minute...what had I done to others? My self-centeredness had produced an inner dialogue and set of reasoning regarding how bad others had treated me or burned me, and I used this mentality to rationalize my own boorish, resistant behavior in response to these wrongdoings that I perceived as personal attacks.

Yes, the actions of those other parties hurt me in many ways, but I was mired in negative thinking and negative responses that weren't getting me or my businesses anywhere. I needed to break down my actions to identify my faults and learn how to better myself—both for my sake and for the sake of all those around me. To achieve solid footing in my life and let go of my pain and bitterness, I was going to have to face my own demons, my own horrible actions. I knew I wouldn't like it. And I knew it wouldn't be easy.

“Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:31-32)

My mind kept telling me the easy thing was to continue being mad and playing the victim. Well, it was certainly “easier” in the sense that I didn’t have to change anything because I was already doing that. Really though, it wasn’t easier because I was miserable. I was unhappy, and those around me were unhappy.

The best thing that I did, and the best thing for you to do, was to take a good, long hard look at myself. *Stay with me here. Don’t let your hurt, bitterness, or pride take over.*

I had to admit to myself that I needed to change. You most likely do too. Eventually, a simple, rational thought broke me: how could I be bitter and upset with others for what they had done to me when I had done others wrong?

“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:14-15)

Do you know what I was? A hypocrite. Yes. I’ll say it again—I was a hypocrite, and so are you if you are acting the way I did. Before you can move forward with the concept of forgiveness, you have to admit you haven’t done a good job at treating others well either.

Seventy Times Seven

As you can imagine, this process isn’t easy at times. You are dealing with pain, anger, frustration, humiliation and tons of other things and just because you do it doesn’t mean you immediately forget it or it becomes better. I wish I had God’s

ability to forgive and forget, but I don't and neither do you. I know with 100% assurance there are things I will turning over to God on a regular basis and that's ok! Because God handles them much better than I handle them.

Did you know the subject of you not being able to forgive and forget is covered in the Bible? Matthew 18:21-22 says,

"Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

This scripture brings me to my next questions for you—
who is your seventy times seven?

Let me tell you about Rick.² He was a friend, a pastor, a property manager and he stole more than \$16,620 dollars from me in a two-week period. When he collected rent money, he was supposed to deposit it immediately in the company bank account. He did deposit it—right into his own pocket. When confronted, he admitted that he had taken the money to cover some bills he had, though he planned on paying it back. It's now been more than three years since he took the money, and he has paid back only a mere \$200.

At this point, I've had to forgive him dozens of times. Every time I think about it, I start to get mad. I start replaying conversations in my head. I start to think of more things I should have either said or done at the time—out of anger, that is. This is normal human emotion and folly. God tells us to keep forgiving repeatedly. As humans, we aren't wired to easily forgive and forget, *but* God is. We must continually model our behavior after Him. Maybe we'll never get it exactly right in our lifetime, but with each attempt, we get closer to God's plan for our life. We get closer to full and complete growth as a human being.

² *Pastor Rick's real name has been changed

Maybe reading this story reminds you of a “Pastor Rick” in your life, or maybe you’ve realized you have been or are currently a “Pastor Rick” in someone’s life. If that’s the case, don’t let thoughts like “I’ve been too bad” or “I was done wrong” keep you from returning to the right path. Yes, you may have a hard time forgiving others or asking someone to forgive you, but God will never have a hard time forgiving you and restoring you! God doesn’t care what “bad” you have done, He simply wants you to come to Him. God knows you are hurting, and He is the healer.

The Ripple Effect

Have you ever dropped a rock into a pool of water? The rock hits the water and immediately sinks to the bottom, but that isn’t all that happens, is it? That rock also causes ripples in all directions and they reach out much farther than just where the rock hit the water. This is called the Ripple Effect because it’s “the continuing and spreading results of an event or action.”

This is what happens in our lives when we don’t handle forgiveness in a Biblical manner. You see, unforgiveness leads to bitterness, anger, blame, conflict, and self-centered rationalization, which all have something big in common. Unforgiveness destroys balance and quite often leads to depression and isolation. When this happens the loneliness leads to hurt and anger and before you know it, you are blaming everyone around you for everything, even things you caused. Why? Because you start rationalizing your actions and words. This creates a ripple effect on everyone around you.

Take my interaction with past employees. Before I got my temper under control, I can remember plenty of times I fell into this pattern, before I got my anger under control. When employees didn’t understand tasks I’d given them, or didn’t complete them to my satisfaction, I’d give out hard criticism as feedback. I told myself at the time that if they couldn’t take my criticism, they were too weak to be on my team.

That kind of thinking made it impossible for me to acknowledge whether my instructions had been unclear, or whether

there was any validity to their way of thinking. There was one way that made sense: my way. If they couldn't grasp my vision, I reacted with frustration rather than curiosity.

Sometimes when those I worked with got upset with the way I spoke to them, I rationalized it was their problem. After all, if they hadn't made the mistake, or had they listened better, then I would have never had to criticize them.

Mixing high expectations with a refusal to admit where I shared blame fed my temper and anger because people were constantly letting me down.

“He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly.” (Proverbs 14:29)

So how does that relate to depressed feelings?

Being angry inevitably makes a mess and ruins everything. Opportunities fizzle, communication becomes strained, and feeling like others are letting you down creates a victim mentality. Everything that goes wrong is *something happening to you* rather than a natural consequence of decisions. Things start to feel passive. Again, we see the ripple continue.

You start asking questions like, “Why is this happening to me?” Because in our blurred vision the world seems cruel and unfair. Everyone you know *must* be trying to take advantage of you and it's not long before this thought process affects your faith. You start asking questions like, “Why is God making me go through this?”

In that mindset, it's easy to feel like God has forgotten about you, or ignoring you or picking on you, or maybe even punishing you unfairly. This leads to having thoughts like, “well my actions can't be worse than the next guy, right?”

When you feel isolated from God and those around you, it's natural to feel lost, alone and frustrated. This can quickly turn into hopelessness and feeling overwhelmed. I know when I feel hopeless and overwhelmed I tend to procrastinate, which then

continues the ripple effect on all those around me.

You never know who all is affected by your actions.

How to Avoid the Ripple Effect

You avoid the ripple effect by implementing biblical accountability and self-awareness into your life. When things aren't going the way you'd hoped, ask yourself what actions and decisions led to where you find yourself.

Stop and asked yourself questions like: How could I have avoided this situation? What could I have done differently? Why did I react the way I did?

You'd be surprised what a difference taking a step back and evaluating your behavior will make in your life. By asking self-aware questions you will start to understand your thoughts and actions. Once you start to understand then you can adjust your reactions and words in a way to avoid the ripple effect.

Remember, this must all be based in God's word.

By implementing this in your life, there will be less conflict in your interactions, and when challenges arise, you'll be able to deal with them in a Godly way.

How do you apply this forgiveness? Simple. When you do something wrong ask that person to forgive you, when someone has done you wrong forgive them, when you have done something wrong forgive yourself, and always make sure you ask God to forgive you.

Go immediately to the person and admit what you did and ask for forgiveness. Then go home and figure out what caused you to do what you did, then develop a game plan to do it again. Let's say you upset someone.

When someone has done you wrong forgive them. When you have done something wrong forgive yourself. The goal here is to apply God's word to your life and stop the ripple effect or cushion it's impact.

Remember, not asking for forgiveness is like a very small pebble thrown into a lake. The pebble will cause a ripple far greater than it's size.

Remember that your words, your thoughts, and your actions affect you and those around you.

Jesus, the Example

Jesus lived completely free of the ripple effect and is the greatest example of a forgiver you will ever encounter. Consider the fact that Jesus, who *never* did any wrong to anyone, offers complete forgiveness to every one of us through His sacrificial offering of Himself. I'm a habitual sinner with a flawed nature, but Jesus, perfect Jesus, loves me, and He forgives me of my sins and He doesn't hold a grudge against me. He is the only one who could justify withholding forgiveness, yet He isn't out to get me nor is He fuming with anger over my actions. Yet, I was doing this to others, and I had no right and neither do you.

It's time to implement a life of forgiveness by applying God's word to your life. In doing so, God will remove the burdens, the hurt, and the pain.

*"For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him."
(2 Chronicles 30:9b)*

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." (Colossians 3:13)

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)

“And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25)

Four Action Steps to Implement Forgiveness

If forgiveness is a hard concept and it might even be a new concept for you, so I've outlined four clear steps for you.

1. Confess your sins to God and ask Him to forgive you.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”
(1 John 1:9)

For a long time, I felt like I couldn't tell God about my faults, or my struggles, or my sins. I was paralyzed with the thought of what would God think and how would God respond? This went on for years and the worst part is I knew God already knew all my sins. I knew God knew all my sins when he sent Jesus to die on the cross for me.

It's time for you to confess your faults, struggles and sins to God. He already knows every sin you've committed and every sin you will commit. God is going to forgive you, restore you and you will immediately feel burdens and guilt lifted.

2. Ask others to forgive you for your actions.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”
(Proverbs 28:13)

This one is hard because I had to weigh my actions against God's word and not what I considered to be right or wrong. I started praying God would lay on my heart those who I needed to apologize too. Each time someone came to my mind, I put their name on a list. I didn't just go back three, five, or even ten years. I

made a list that went all the way back through high school.

I sent apologetic emails, texts and letters asking for their forgiveness and asked them what I needed to do to make it right. The one thing I left out was excuses. I didn't apologize and then say, "But had you not done what you did, I wouldn't have done what I did."

Each time I contacted someone, I endured a rush of embarrassment because I'm human. I was admitting my fault in the matter, and I was asking for forgiveness. Each time after I completed contacting someone, I would experience a feeling of satisfaction—a burden had been lifted. I found that my mind and spirit were renewed and strengthened and my relationship with God was growing.

It's your turn. Start making your list of everyone you have done wrong and then make a plan of action to apologize.

3. Forgive others for their actions against you.

"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." (Mark 11:25)

"What? Now you have gone too far, Nathan," you're thinking. "I'm not forgiving anyone until they admit their fault and ask for forgiveness."

I get it and have had the exact same thoughts; however, Mark 11:25 commands us to forgive others and it doesn't say to forgive when they ask for forgiveness. It says to forgive.

So, that I did. I made a list of everyone who had wronged me wrong over the years. It was hard because I didn't want to remember the anger, pain, or humiliation, but I knew I had to address it. I recorded my feelings, and I started praying for God to remove the bitterness, the anger, and the pain. I started uttering words of forgiveness.

I forgave my friend for embezzling money. What? Why would I forgive them? Well, God says to forgive others so we

can be forgiven, and as I started to forgive them, I could feel the burden, sadness, and bitterness literally being lifted from my life. All the anger melted away.

It's your turn. Start making your list of everyone you need to forgive. Take hold of the seed of bitterness and start ripping it out. I promise you once you go through this process you will have wished you had done it years and years ago!

4. *Forgive yourself for your actions.*

*"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."
(Hebrews 10:17)*

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Don't live in regret and guilt over your past. Once you have confessed your sins, God says He remembers them no more. Sure, you might have to deal with the consequences of your actions, but God wants us to live a life of joy, and He wants us to be an example to others. God wants us to be Christlike in an unChristlike world.

That means if you are sitting around moping, then you aren't setting a good example for others. The great thing about serving God is that there is more mercy in God than there is sin in me, and God knows exactly what a wretched sinner I am. Each time you find yourself having a pity party or wondering if God can use you, turn to Philippians 4:13 and read these words out loud.

*Do you want to work on this in your life?
Refer to the Handling Life Program on page 123 to get started.*

Dealing with Forgiveness

*Your 5 Daily Devotionals can be found
on pages 160 – 169*

7

Developing Patience

*“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage,
and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait,
I say, on the Lord.”*

(Psalms 27:14)

HAVE YOU EVER HAD A THOUGHT LIKE THIS: “I don’t want to wait on God. I want what I want *now!*”

Well, this thought is normal but dangerous. When we don’t let God have control, we have to fill the void, and we have to fill it *now*. For me, filling the void centered around traveling and buying material things. What are you filling your void with? Some fill it with TV, sports, and collections, while others choose hard core things like drugs, alcohol, and porn.

In my Modern-Day Jonah story, my impatience pushed things to happen. This caused me to have conflict with God. I was either pushing for things God didn’t have planned for me or I was not doing things in God’s timing. I was seeking to find balance and happiness through my own efforts, which, as I’ve shared, lead only to emptiness and frustration.

I learned the hard way that true joy, success contentment and gratification only comes by praising, worshipping and serving God. By doing things God's way I've gotten the most control of my life I've ever had, but I know I must *constantly* work on trusting God and being patient.

Trusting God requires patience.

You see, God has a plan and a time, and normally I don't know or understand His plan or His timing, but I know with 100% certainty that when I don't wait upon the Lord, I cause issues in my life and the lives of others.

Just so you know, developing patience comes in various forms. It could be waiting on God's timing for a big business deal or new job or simply being kind to the slow cashier checking you out at the grocery store.

Being Patient is Hard

Let's be honest with each other. Developing, applying and sustaining patience is hard. It's one of the hardest things for me to do. I'm a type A personality who has done whatever is needed, whenever needed, to get to where I wanted to go. So, when I felt God wanting me to transition from my old businesses to my current one, I was extremely nervous about trusting God with the timing and growth of it. To say it's been a tough move would be an understatement. Relying on God, not forcing doors open, and turning down opportunities because I didn't have peace has made making money harder than my old ways.

At first, I was quite frustrated with God and questioned what happened and why was He making me go through this process. Opportunities that I thought were perfect didn't work out, and I really didn't understand why at the time. This caused me to have a seesaw of emotions. All types of questions ran through my mind. What did God want from me and what His end goal was—questions like "Why me, God?" or "Haven't I paid enough for my transgressions?"

I know God's end goal is for me to be dependent on Him, and He has promised to take care of me and provide for me. Even knowing this and seeing it time and time again in my life didn't, and doesn't, make it easier. My human side of worry, frustration, and the thought of just doing it my way consumed me at times. As I started to pray and wait on God, it was a bit of a culture shock. I found myself not knowing what to do in a situation. I would wonder,

"Should I push forward or sit back and wait?"

Think about it this way. God created the earth, He created the apple tree and he created you. If you want an apple you can't go sit under the apple tree and say "hey God, hand me an apple." God's done his part, you have to do yours. You also can't say "hey God, protect me while I climb this apple tree and put my full weight on this tiny apple branch." God's done his part, you have to be wise about the choices you make.

Just because you are waiting on God doesn't mean you sit down and do nothing. It means you get into His word and do things according to His word.

Patience isn't something you are born with. It's a characteristic you learn, and nurture and maintain. Ultimately, patience requires leaning in to hear the voice and guidance of the Lord, and then acknowledging and understanding God doesn't always answer right away. (see section on knowing God's will)

In the past, business endeavors got done quickly because I made them happen quickly. At times, I would even force the pieces of the puzzle together to get the deal done. Because of my lack of patience in the past, I damaged many things, and only God and time can heal them but I am required to do my part.

Here's a big difference in me: over the last several years: I've worked on several big projects that would have opened up major financial doors for me. One of these deals involved a hugely successful book. The author had passed away, so I approached the foundation about starting a certification program for the

materials. We went back and forth for months and finally reached a verbal deal that was also communicated via email. All we needed now was for the lawyer to finalize the papers.

The time to sign the contract came and went. The first delay was the lawyer's house had flooded. The second delay was the lawyer was on vacation, and the third delay was the lawyer was at a conference. All the while, I was assured the contract was coming.

I started to get that feeling that my offer and idea was being used to shop it to others. Unfortunately, my gut was right. The foundation signed a contract with another person. This burned. I asked myself why God allowed this to happen. I knew I had followed God's word and conducted myself in a Christlike manner. Then it hit me. This was God's plan. I couldn't control this foundation. I couldn't make them do right. All I could do was show them the love of Christ and thank the good Lord that he spared me from a partnership with an entity that loved money more than doing the right thing.

You see, God knew the heart of those at that foundation, and He worked to protect me. He then used this as a learning lesson for me. Work diligently, work hard, and chase your dreams, but be willing and able to move on if that isn't where God wants you. Don't become entrenched in proving you were right.

Then it really hit me hard—I mean squarely between the eyes hard. The CEO of the foundation was me at one time. I was that person who did or said whatever needed to be done to get the best deal possible for myself. No thought or worry about what it did to others and no consideration about my personal testimony.

What does this have to do with patience? Everything. Just because God introduced me to this foundation and just because we had discussions didn't mean God wanted me involved. I had to wait to see His purpose revealed. It wasn't His plan for my life at that very moment, and I know that even in the disappointment I'm still called to be patient, kind, and forgiving. I'm called to be an example.

Waiting Patiently on God's Plan

Waiting patiently on God is by far one of the hardest things for me to do. It's like being on a road trip and not knowing where I'm going or how long it's going to take to get there. If I start to focus on things not related to God then I will start to despise the trip. That's why it's critical to focus on God and His plan, even if you don't know it.

Can you imagine how Moses felt after leading the Israelites out of Egypt? He was doing exactly what God asked him to do, but in doing so, he found himself trapped with no clear options. He was boxed in by two mountains, the Red Sea, and the Egyptian army.

Moses was doing God's will, and he could see *no* way out. I bet he was wondering, "What is God doing?" and I'm 100% positive Moses was running numerous scenarios through his mind, from whether he should climb the mountains, or swim across the sea, or surrender to the Egyptians.

What does God do? In good ol' southern English, God said, "Moses, sit down, shut up and be patient. I have a plan."

Have you ever considered what would have happened had Moses not waited on God? The Egyptians would have caught up and killed them all—or at least enslaved them again. By waiting on God, Moses honored God, and God honored him in return protected Moses. God provided a way out that Moses never even considered as an option. Just think about the look on Moses' face when God split the Red Sea.

What's going on in your life that you just need to "sit down, shut up and be patient" with? Whatever it is, you need to do it so God can work in your life.

God Has a Plan

God has a plan for you and me but it requires us to be patient and diligent. It requires us to admit God is in control and everything we have is from Him. This "newfound" approach to my personal

life and my professional life has produced outcomes I didn't know could exist.

As you go through this process, it will take time for you to get your wits about you, but as with anything with God the more you do it and the more you depend on Him, the more second nature it becomes. Had you asked me in the summer of 2014 if I could ever develop patience, I would have said *absolutely not!* However, because of God, every day I grow a bit more patient, and you can as well. Full disclosure: sometimes I still struggle with being patient and when I do I try to get back to God's way as soon as I can.

Is there something you need to be waiting on God for?

Impatience Can Produce Dire Results

What happens when we are impatient? Well, let's look at the account of Abraham and Sarah. They were both old and wanted to have a child. God had even promised them a child many years earlier and what did Abraham do when he heard God's promise? He literally fell on the ground laughing!

The choice Abraham and Sarah made not to wait on God has produced dire results til this day. Instead of being patient and waiting on God's promise, Sarah convinced Abraham to conceive a child with Hagar, Sarah's maidservant. Do you know what this one sin created? Abraham conceived a son with Hagar and his name was Ishmael. Ishamel became the father of the Arabs. You see, Abraham and Sarah's impatience created a dire result that affects the nation of Israel to this day.

Conversely, having patience produces either immediate or long-lasting benefits. Just recently, I was in the process of deciding whether I should sell a business or list it for sale. The loan on the business needed to be refinanced in the next eight months. In an effort to sell the property, I listed it a commercial realtor and within six weeks I had a total of zero inquiries. Not one. Not even a phone call. The broker was quite puzzled

himself. So, there I sat at my desk on a Friday evening with the refinance packet from a lender. It was all filled out except one minor check on a box. The question wasn't a major issue, but I knew if I checked the right box, I wouldn't get the refinance. There was *no* way the bank would ever know any different. It was not a major issue!

I sat there and thought and thought and thought. I argued with myself that if I didn't sign it I might not get another chance to refinance it, but if I did sign it I was lying to the bank and while they would never know God would. Ultimately, I closed the file and sent the lender an email and thanked him for his time and told him I needed to hold off on the refinance.

The very next morning, I got a call stating there was a gentleman at my business inquiring about the property. He was described as a very old man who was driving a twenty-year-old car. It was Saturday, and I really didn't feel like dealing with it, but my realtor was out of pocket. So, it was either I go and talk to the gentleman or let it go. I got in my car and drove out to speak with him.

On the drive out, I didn't have much hope this would work out. Guess what? Turns out this potential buyer was a heavy hitter who I had tried to contact six months back with no success. He had never returned my calls which had always puzzled me. Come to find out he had been in the hospital and hadn't gotten any of my calls! We spoke for about thirty minutes, walked around the property, worked out a deal, and shook hands.

That following Monday he brought me a one-page contract, and that Friday he closed on the property! Six days from the point of meeting to closing!

*Had I not been patient and waited on God
I don't believe this would have happened.*

*Had I not acted with integrity on the bank papers
I don't believe this would have happened.*

You see, when we wait on God and work within His moral guidelines, He works things out for us in ways we could never imagine.

“The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them.”
(Proverbs 11:3)

Action Steps to Develop Patience

Yield to the Holy Spirit

Patience requires power we aren't born and power we will never be able to obtain. The only way to develop patience is through the power of the Holy Spirit and the more we yield to the Holy Spirit, the more patience we will develop.

Wait with Expectantly

Everything God does has a purpose and has a time. God uses time to teach us patience and to cultivate our character because God wants us to grow dependent upon Him. God wants us to be Christlike and when you are having a hard time waiting is when you need to get closer to God because when we are hopeful and have an expectant heart, God can use us in a powerful way.

Have a Thankful Heart

Making the choice to focus on things you are thankful for will change your everyday life. How? Because when you are focused on thanking God for all He has done you won't have time to focus on the negative. Having a thankful heart also produces patience because we aren't focus on ourselves.

Think Before You Act

Reacting before you have considered all the facts and weighed all the results never ends well. It's time to start thinking before you act. It's time to take a break from constant conflict and start looking at how God wants you to respond.

Take Time to Help Others

Not having patience is a clear sign of selfishness. We are so focused on ourselves we don't take time to see what's going on around us. It's time to start focusing on be patient with others. When we start practicing patience we will start realizing how many people around us need our help.

Discuss Your Feelings

It's time to start discussing your circumstances with another Christian brother or sister. There is a wealth of support and benefits from regularly associating with other believers. Find someone who can provide you with comfort and wisdom.

Focus on the Goal

God has a plan for you and God has a calling for you! Yes, trials, tribulations and problems will be part of your life but God wants you to focus on loving others and sharing the gospel with others. It's time to stop focusing on everything that doesn't bring you closer to God.

Study the Perfect Example

Jesus is the perfect model of a patient man. He was twenty-nine and a half years old before he began His ministry. This means our life is a marathon, not a sprint.

Rely on God for Strength

Talk to God about your lack of patience. He already knows you are struggling and there is no reason to just “grin and bear” it any longer. Ask God for deliverance, ask Him for strength, ask Him to give you everything you need to develop patience.

*Do you want to work on this in your life?
Refer to the Handling Life Program on page 123 to get started.*

Developing Patience

*Your 5 Daily Devotionals can be found
on pages 170 – 179*

8



Applying the Right Wisdom

*“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure,
then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated,
full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality,
and without hypocrisy.”*

(James 3:17)

THE OUTCOME OF EVERY ACTION is directly linked to the type of wisdom we apply. Jonah applied his wisdom to his life and see what happened?

In James 3 we see that our earthly wisdom produces problems in our lives while biblical wisdom produces the opposite. Let me give you an example of earthly wisdom.

For years, I appeared as the nicest guy you had ever met and I would do anything to help you, but if you crossed me, I was toughest, sharpest-tongued person you had ever met. I would do anything to protect myself, my family and my interests. I would “burn” bridges, hurt feelings and damage relationships

to make sure I was right. I was applying *earthly* wisdom to my life and it was producing exactly what is described in James 3.

However, when I started striving to apply biblical wisdom to my life, I started to see things happening I didn't think possible. When conflict arises, I can feel anger building up inside me and I can feel the harsh words on the tip of my tongue, but instead of saying them I find myself praying to God to help me control my tongue and my actions.

The unique thing is, the more I practice applying God's wisdom to my life, the more natural it feels to do it. Now, for full disclosure, there are still times when I want to get my vengeance or say the last word. However, I've come to realize this does nothing to help me or the situation. It only hurts me and complicates the matter. Trust me, even though it's so hard to just let it go, ultimately it is the best thing to do.

What is Earthly Wisdom?

Earthly wisdom is man doing what he believes is best for him based on his human knowledge, experience and understanding.

“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” (James 3:15-16)

The result of using earthly wisdom to deal with a life situation is bitterness, selfishness, strife, anxiety, stress, confusion, earthly desires and concerns—*ultimately misery*.

What is Biblical Wisdom?

Biblical wisdom is applying God's word to every aspect of our life, no matter the situation or circumstances.

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without

hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” (James 3:17-18)

The result of using biblical wisdom to deal with a life situation is peacefulness, gentleness, kindness, love for others, sincerity, Godly desires and concerns—*ultimately, finding joy in the circumstance*. Wow! What a difference in result.

Biblical wisdom is found in God’s word.

Therefore, to learn biblical wisdom you must learn God’s word.

Earthly wisdom produces an outcome that causes issues in our lives while biblical wisdom creates a life we want and can enjoy! At times, earthly wisdom and biblical wisdom look very similar. Principles such as love thy neighbor and a soft answer turns away wrath are both principles found in societal norms (civil human nature) *and* in God’s word.

You don’t have to be a Christian to learn these principles or even practice them. The main difference is that biblical wisdom comes from God himself and stands true no matter how circumstances may change. For example, applying biblical wisdom requires you to love your neighbor all the time, not just when you want to and in an argument, biblical wisdom requires you to listen and not say something you will regret later! As you know, often the words we say is like throwing gasoline on a fire.

Let me give an example of using earthly wisdom for life circumstances. For years, I was the nicest guy you had ever met, and I would do anything to help you, but if you crossed me, I was sharpest-tongued person you had ever met. I would burn bridges, hurt feelings or damage relationships to get to my end goal. What was missing in my life? How could I be Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? I was applying *earthly* wisdom to my life. “If you’re nice to me, I’m nice to you. If you’re not nice to me, I’m not nice to you.”

When I started applying biblical wisdom to my life, I also started allowing the Holy Spirit to work through me. So, when harsh words comes to mind now, my instant reaction is to ask God for help to control my tongue, emotions and actions. Without that quick thought, and application, my human nature side can and will lash out.

The more we practice this and apply it to our lives, the more natural it feels to show the love of Christ to others in all circumstances. Now, for full disclosure, there are still times when I want to get my vengeance or say the last word. However, I've come to realize this does nothing to help me or the situation. It only hurts me and complicates the matter. Trust me, even though it's so hard to just let it go, ultimately it is the best thing to do. Then you are free to resolve the situation using biblical wisdom.

Making a Conscious Choice

You must make a conscious CHOICE to apply biblical wisdom to your life. If you wait until the last moment to decide what the answer to the question is or how you are going to handle the matter, then most likely you are going to respond with earthly wisdom.

Our desire and daily focus should be to develop a single-minded faith, a single-minded desire to apply biblical wisdom in all areas of our life.

Often, the number one struggle for a man is his double-mindedness, which leads to instability.

“...he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.”
(James 1:8)

When you are double-minded, you are conflicted over whom to serve. Remember, *no* man can serve two masters. You can NOT serve God while serving yourself. If you are living in the flesh you are NOT applying God's wisdom to your life.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other...” (Matthew 6:24)

It's time to start choosing God's wisdom over your own wisdom.

When I was growing up, my father would tell my brothers and me, virtually every day, that he had made a conscious choice to love our mother that day. As a teenager, I really didn't understand this statement. It was quite confusing, but now that I have been married for sometime, I truly understand this statement. My father was declaring his intentions for the day.

- He had made a choice to love my mother no matter what.
- He had made a choice to be faithful to her.
- He had made a choice to be a godly man and husband.

This type of action represents how we should apply biblical wisdom to our everyday lives. Word of advice, be careful not to pick and choose where you apply God's wisdom. To truly walk with God we need to apply His wisdom to all aspects of our lives.

One of the first things I say to myself daily, before my feet hit the floor, is, “Today I'm going to trust God and lean on Him.” I've learned I can't do it by myself. No matter how good or smart or diligent I am, there is just too much in life to handle on my own. The life God has chosen for us is full of numerous, fantastic promises to us that he reveals throughout scripture, and the results of his choices are so much better than ours that there is no comparison.

“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

The daily choices you make will determine whether this promise is fulfilled in your life. As Christians, we have daily decisions to make—some easy, some hard and some very uncomfortable and just because a decision is difficult or uncomfortable does *not* give us an excuse to ignore God’s word. Consider what God says in Matthew 6:25:

“Therefore, I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”

It’s a Daily Choice

It’s a choice to stay in God’s word. It’s a choice to develop your prayer life. It’s a choice to let the Holy Spirit work in you and through you. It’s a choice the type of wisdom you apply to your life.

You see, the problem in our lives is we often don’t apply what we know. Do you know the difference between knowledge and wisdom?

Knowledge is a mental possession of facts arrived at through environment, education and experience.

Wisdom is the ability to transfer knowledge into action.

Essentially, knowing something doesn’t matter, if you don’t apply it to the situation. It’s critical that you take what you know and apply it.

Jonah knew what to do but he choose to ignore God’s calling. He had the knowledge but he applied his own wisdom. As discussed in chapter 2, God has a calling on your life and you must choose whether you are going to obey Him or ignore Him.

If you are currently obeying God, then stay in God’s Word, keep praying and keep seeking Him. If you are currently ignoring

God, then you have made a choice to disobey God. This decision has created a life full of stress, anxiety, misery and conflict and now you aren't willing to admit it and address it. Instead, you are blaming everyone else except yourself. Please listen and know, I am NOT judging you or condemning. I am saying this because I was in this situation for many, many years! This is why I've written this book. To help you and encourage you, but I also must challenge you in a loving and compassionate way.

*Do you know what Jesus says about those choosing
to make the right choice?*

Jesus told his disciples if you know something, then act on it! Do it and you be satisfied in doing in.

*"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."
(John 13:17)*

*Do you know what God's word says about those
who don't seek out God's wisdom?*

*"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but
fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7)*

This process is a day by day, moment by moment one. To develop a daily walk with God and apply biblical wisdom to your life you must seek His wisdom.

*"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that
giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it
shall be given him." (James 1:5)*

Seeking His wisdom isn't a one-time thing. It's a day by day process. Look at Solomon, he was the wisest and wealthiest man who ever lived. Why? Because when God asked him what he wanted, Solomon said wisdom. Solomon knew wisdom was

the key to life but as Solomon gained more and more wisdom and more and more wealth, he stopped focusing on God. By the end of Solomon's life, he was worshipping other gods and had turned his back on God. This is why you **MUST** make a daily choice to seek and apply God's wisdom to your life.

Have you accepted Jesus as your personal savior?

If not, then the time to do so is now. Visit Handling-Life.org/KnowGod to learn about accepting Jesus into your heart.

Action Steps to God's Wisdom

Develop a Daily Bible Study

This isn't just reading the Bible for five minutes and closing it. It's not a chore. It's an opportunity to develop your relationship with God. You see, what matters is for you to start reading the Bible, and focusing on what you just read and considering how it applies to your life.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Timothy 2:15)

Read God's word, think about it and then start applying it to daily life situations. Looking for a place to start? Then I would recommend the book of Proverbs and the book of James. Proverbs has great points of how to handle everyday life and James is written directly to Christians. Other suggestions, check out BibleStudyTools.com and commentaries like the Matthew Henry Commentary. You can also study the lives of people like Jonah, Samson, Rebekah, and Abigail. When studying people of the Bible, consider what they did that lead a good outcome or a bad outcome.

Develop Your Prayer Life

I was raised believing you had to get down on your knees, fold your hands and pray to God for 30 minutes a day to have a good prayer life. For the record, there is *nothing* wrong with praying this way as long as you are developing a prayer life. But should we just be praying one time a day?

“Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

No, we should be praying all throughout the day. Consider this, your boss is breathing down your neck, is that the right time to get on your knees and start praying? Probably not. However, it is the time to start praying. You see, praying is communicating with God and God knows the thoughts of our minds. So, in your mind, start asking God to give you what you need to handle this situation. The overall goal is to develop a prayer life that is second nature and therefore impacts every aspect of your life.

Diligently Apply God’s Word

Applying God’s word is a choice you must make every moment of your life. It’s a daily choice. You have the choice to either do things God’s way or not do them God’s way. It’s not a complicated process until we start to complicate it. You must commit to answer questions before they are ever asked. Make a commitment to run from temptation and avoid sin at all costs. *“Take up your cross daily.”*

“And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” (Luke 9:23)

I must admit, at times I still struggle with applying God’s word to my life. The good news is it does get easy over time and when you experience what happens when you give God control, you want to do it more. I can say with 100% certainty that I wish I

had started applying God's word to my life when I was young. I could have avoided a lot of unnecessary heartache and problems.

Seek the Counsel of Others

It's critical to find someone (or someone's) who you can be real and honest with. When you seek the counsel of others you are less likely to make the choice or react the wrong way. I encourage you to seek the counsel of others who have a heart for God. Those who are spiritually minded and consistently striving to employ biblical wisdom to their lives. Even though society tells us not to share our fears and thoughts with others, it is very important that we do. I did myself a great disservice by not talking with others about my fears and thoughts. Accountability to others is essential if we are to succeed in learning how to discern and apply biblical wisdom to life situations.

Ultimately, the way I made it through the process of turning back to God was by opening up and seeking wisdom and guidance from a dear friend. The scriptures clearly encourage us to seek counsel of others.

"Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety." (Proverbs 11:14, emphasis added)

Right there in scripture, the Lord states there is safety seeking counsel from others. So, are you willing to start seeking counsel from others? Consider what Psalms 1:1-3 says,

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his

leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” (Psalms 1:1-3)

Recognize the Need

Before you can have something you must be willing to admit you need it. This means you must admit your wisdom isn't working and the only solution is to implement God's wisdom in your life.

Use God's Wisdom First

The best way to avoid issues is to do things God's way—the first time. It's time to start doing things God's way before trying it your way. It's time to seek God's wisdom before developing your plan, before responding, or before making a decision.

Fear Your Actions

You are responsible for your actions and will give an account for everything you do. The type of wisdom you apply either produces actions which glorify God or dishonor God. When you look at it this way, your fear will drive you to apply God's wisdom.

Ask God for Wisdom

God is ready to pour His wisdom into your life but you must ask God for it. You must ask in seriousness and you must be willing to actually apply it. This requires you to have a relationship with God which produces a heart for God.

*Do you want to work on this in your life?
Refer to the Handling Life Program on page 123 to get started.*

Applying the Right Wisdom

*Your 5 Daily Devotionals can be found
on pages 180 – 189*

9

Implementing a Daily Walk

*Jesus spoke to the people once more and said,
“I am the light of the world. If you follow me,
you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you
will have the light that leads to life.”*

(John 8:12)

THE PROCESS OF TURNING BACK TO GOD begins in our heart and manifests in our daily lives. While it may seem complicated it’s actually quite simple. All you have to do is choose to obey God.

So, why is it hard?

Let’s be honest, sin is fun. The issue we often don’t consider when we are ignoring God is the consequences of our actions. I bet, if the consequences of sin were immediate, we would definitely think twice before we sinned.

You see, if making the right choice was easy, I believe we would never make the wrong choice every time. Which means we wouldn't have the problems we have. To address this issue in my life, I've started breaking things down into very specific tasks.

- I know if I spend quality time with my wife our relationship will be better.
- I know if I eat right and exercise I will feel better and have more energy.
- I know if I wait and take a deep breath before responding to a text or email I can avoid conflict.
- I know if I focus on the blessings in my my life I will develop a heart of gratitude.
- I know if I spend time studying God's word I will have a better relationship with Him.

You get the picture, right? It's a choice.

As discussed in the chapter on wisdom, wisdom is applying the knowledge you have. Think about it this way. Have you ever touched a red hot stove burner? I haven't. Why? Growing up, I was told to never touch a red hot stove burner because it would burn me and hurt really bad.

I was given the knowledge by someone who knew better than me. Well, I'm happy to report that I've never touched a red hot stove burner which means I've never burned myself. Why? Because I had the knowledge and I when I applied the knowledge it became wisdom. Now, had I touched the red hot burner, I would have had the knowledge but not the wisdom.

So, how does this apply to God and you relationship with Him? Growing up, I was also told to read God's word every day because a Proverb a day would keep the devil away. Well, this statement is unfortunately NOT true! I could read Proverbs every day, and I could memorize every chapter and verse, but if I do *not* apply it to my life, what good is it?

I'm going to be 100% honest with you. I know not touching a red-hot stove is the best way for me to live, and I know studying God's word and applying His words to my life is the best way for me to live and while I've never struggled to not touch a red hot stove burner, but I struggle at times to apply God's word to my life.

Odd huh? I know the consequences of touching a red-hot stove burner and I know the consequences of not applying God's word to my life.

The reason is quite simply. It's a choice.

To make the choice easier we must develop our daily walk with God. This means we must overcome the obstacle of avoiding spending time with God everyday.

God's Loyalty to Man

Even though we can break our fellowship with God and turn our back on Him—like Jonah did—God will never forsake us or turn His back on us..

With zeal and jealousy, God is actively seeking to turn believers back to Him. He pursues them and pours out His love and affection on them and when necessary He correct them in love. God is loyal to us, even when we aren't loyal to him.

If you are ever have the thought of "where is God" in your life, then you need to adjust the question. You should be asking where are you in your relationship with God. God is always seeking an active relationship with you.

What's Holding you Back?

With this reassurance that God is actively seeking relationship with us, let's address things which are holding us back from having a daily walk with God.

"I don't have the time."

I hear this excuse often, and often it's myself saying it. When you really think about this excuse, it's rather comical. How many hours a day do we spend texting, emailing, and checking Facebook and Twitter and Instagram? Yet still we can't find five minutes to pray or read God's Word? I have time to go to the gym but I don't have time for God?

To overcome this excuse you must carve out time and do it. The perfect time for me is right when I wake up. I try to be vigilant about this time because if I make the mistake of picking my phone up, it's over. Suddenly there's something that must be done and my quiet time with God is over.

When do I pray? I often find myself praying in the car. I'm alone and there aren't many distractions. The fact is do what works for you! As you know, God's word promises that if we seek Him, He will take care of us.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Matthew 6:33)

Try this. Find a day and time each day that works for you and then set your calendar, your phone or your watch to remind yourself to pray and read God's word. You see, the more you practice a trait, the more chance it has of becoming a habit.

"I want God to answer my prayers, my way."

I've often found myself praying for God to answer my need *exactly* the way I wanted it answered. The result? In my mind, God didn't answer my prayer because I didn't see what I wanted to see happen.

If you are waiting on God to answer your specific prayer in a specific manner it won't happen unless it's God's will.

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (James 4:3)

What does this mean? It means you are asking for something that's isn't God's will or your motives for asking aren't Godly. God can do anything He chooses and at anytime He chooses. He is omnipotent and knows all, but we often miss God's plan for our lives because we are focused on the answer we want, not the answer He is giving us.

Instead of desiring and looking for your answer in your way to your individual problem, try focusing on God's will and what He wants done. Pray He gives you wisdom to understand His will and start praying for things which don't conflict with His word.

"I feel guilty approaching God with my needs."

I struggle—as I am sure many of you do—with feeling guilty about selfishly approaching God with my needs. I'm not talking about needs which are selfish. I'm talking about needs which are needed in my life. I approach Him, saying something like, "Well, God, here I am. I'm in a bind and need your help" or "God, help me grow my business so I can provide for my family." My prayers seem flippant or insincere because I feel guilty about asking God for His blessings or His help.

Do you know what Hebrews 4:16 says? It says:

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Did you read that? We are encouraged to come into the presence of God with boldness and confidence, not with guilt. Dictionary.com defines confidence as “full trust; belief in the powers, trustworthiness.” This means God wants us to come to Him with *full trust* and confidence in *Him* that He *will* give us grace and mercy in our time of need.

This has become a life verse for me! I’m striving daily to apply it to my prayer life and to my daily thought process. When you have moments of guilt, remember God has your backs, and He wants to help you. For this to happen, you must be willing to give Him full control. You must be willing to have faith and trust in Him.

I’m sure there are struggles and “excuses” I haven’t addressed but please know ANY struggles or “excuse” you have is addressed in God’s word. So, dig into God’s word and find.

When God Answers Your Prayer

As your prayer life increases, you will begin seeing God answer you. You will also start to realize how God has already been answering prayers, just not the way you wanted Him to.

An issue to be aware of is making sure you give credit where credit is due. When things turn out well for us or suddenly start going our way, we often thank friends, family, the boss, the universe, or sometimes we chalk it up to luck. The sad thing is we often don’t give God the credit He is due. I’m bad about having my prayers answered and giving myself a mental high-five for the *amazing* job I did! My thought is wrong and it’s rude. I’m working on making sure I always give God the credit.

“And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hearth us. And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” (1 John 5:14-15)

When God answers your prayers, then take the time to give Him the proper credit He is due! Praise Him and Worship His name!

Greatest Benefit of Walking with God

The greatest benefit of our daily walk with God is joy! When you are right with God, joy is an automatic benefit. Why? Because you know God’s love, His plan, and you feel His protection. You know no matter what is going on God is in control. Once you have experienced joy in any circumstance it gives you a reason to stay on track with God.

Joy is your calling card; it’s what others see in you.

Do others see you and want to have what you have, or do they see you and say “Well, if that’s a Christian , then no thank you!” You see, when we live with God’s joy, we are set apart from the world because it empowers us:

1. Joy allows us to show other the love of Christ.
2. Joy allows us the opportunity to share the gospel with others.
3. Joy gives us the ability to bear the burdens our life and the burdens of others
4. Joy gives us strength and focus to do the tasks set before us.
5. Joy also gives us the ability to plant seeds in the life of others.

There are numerous others things joy allows us to do. I pray you will develop your relationship with God so you can experience true joy.

Maintaining Joy

To maintain joy we must acknowledge Jesus is the foundation of our joy. He is the vine from which we draw our joy from. To maintain our joy, we must constantly stay connected to Him. So, how do we maintain joy?

1. ***Surrender to Jesus.*** Mentally commit to maintaining a moment by moment relationship with Jesus, no matter what the circumstances or issues are.
2. ***Depend on Jesus.*** Jesus is in control and has your back. That doesn't mean you can just sit down and do nothing. Growing up my mother cooked almost every meal I ate. Do you know what didn't she do? She didn't set the table and she didn't wash the dishes. That was my job. Our relationship with Jesus is no different. He has done His part, now you must do your part.
3. ***Rest in Jesus.*** Life is hard at times. When you are weary and tired take it to Jesus. Tell Him about your burdens, your fears and your concerns.
4. ***Obey Jesus.*** Don't make excuses or don't delay. Do things God's way and see what happens in your life.
5. ***Rejoice in Jesus.*** Focus on His glory, His grace, His mercy, His forgiveness. Jesus died for you and He loves you and He wants the best for you.

To Go or Not to Go to Church?

To go or not to go to church was a question I addressed for 10 years before coming to a solid answer. As you know, I grew up a preacher's kid, and I had been involved in church all of my life

but as I grew older and wiser (in my mind) I didn't like what I saw at church.

I didn't like the hypocrisy of seeing people say one thing, yet do another. I didn't like the legalism or judgmental attitude of others. Instead of seeking counsel from another, I decided my quiet time and prayer life would be enough to maintain my walk with God.

This became my biggest "excuse" not to attend church. Sure, I used other excuses not to attend church like I was tired after a long week of work or I needed to spend time with my family. The odd thing is I never used these excuses when I wanted to do something that didn't involve church.

Overtime, I came to realize that behind my own curtain, I had the same hypocrisy as those in church. Here's the God's honest truth, everyone is a hypocrite. Every church has issues because the church is ran by people and what are people? They are sinners.

So, what was the difference between them and me? Simple. They were at least trying.

"For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20)

This thought really started to weigh on me and I knew needed to get involved in a local, Bible believing church. Now that I'm actively involved in a church, you know what? I still see the hypocrisy but instead of focusing on the negative, I'm focused on developing my relationship with God and fellowshiping with other believers.

Getting to know other Christians means I don't have to deal with the hardships of my life by myself. I now have Christian brothers who I can go and seek counsel from.

So, it's time to address your excuses for being out of church. I promise if you start participating in a Bible-believing, Bible-teaching church, you will be thankful you got involved.

Victory over Trials

Walking daily with the Lord doesn't change the reality of the world around us. We can expect the Lord to strengthen us to meet life's challenges, but there is no such thing as immunity to the trials and tribulations of life.

So, why do God's people suffer from the same problems as non-believers and even those who bypass the rules of fair play? Simple—we live in an imperfect world, and God doesn't promise us a life of joy. Instead, He promises us a life of *finding joy* in all circumstances.

In other words, when trials and tribulations arise, you'll be equipped to handle the situation because you know God is in control and God has a plan. You see, as a believer you have God on your side, whereas the unsaved has to face the adversities of life on their own. For clarity, this doesn't mean believers will rely on God, but it means they have the ability to lean on God.

Why would a loving and all-powerful God permit his children to go through such things as financial hardships, diseases, and untold horrors in everyday life on planet Earth? After all, doesn't our loving Lord Jesus wish us to live an easy and comfortable existence? The answer is no. The Word of God teaches us that our Lord loves His children, and He "works all things together for good" (Rom. 8:28) for us. But the more we follow Him, the harder the trials and tribulations will become because He wants to teach us to depend on Him. Through those trials, He is our victory.

"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

The trials and tribulations that He allows in our lives are an essential part of the working together of all things for our own good. In other words, believers can be assured that all trials and tribulations carry a divine purpose.

As in all things, God's ultimate purpose for us is to grow more and more into the image of His Son:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

However, we must be careful never to make excuses for our "trials and tribulations" if they are a direct or indirect result of our own wrongdoing. If those hardships are of our own making, then we must confess our sin and make proper amends for our bad behavior. God will heal us and provide for us, but that doesn't mean we won't suffer from our actions.

When you confess those sins, acknowledge and guard against having remorse only for being caught. It's like the little kid who gets caught eating cookies and says, "I'm sorry." Is he sorry for eating the cookies? Or just sorry that he got caught?

Instead of just being sorry for "getting caught" through hardships, allow that remorse to lead you to true repentance, which is the ultimate step of asking for forgiveness. Repentance is a powerful concept for the soul. Repentance is working hard to understand your own weaknesses and shortcomings to ensure that you don't make the same mistake again. Repentance will lead you into victory as you walk daily with the Lord.

God Is with You

Though the entire story of Jonah one thing is consistent—God *never* leaves Jonah. God is there when Jonah is running from Him, God is there when Jonah is on the boat, and God is there is when Jonah is praising Him in the belly of the fish. This is the God we serve. When we try and leave God, He never leaves us. Instead, He will pursue us, protect us, love us, and forgive us when we confess our sins.

Like Jonah, you and I have left God, but God has never left you or me. I'm a sinner. I've failed God many, many times. When this has happened in the past, I've had the tendency to

stay in my corner, feeling like I couldn't be used because I was damaged goods.

Now, in my Modern-Day Jonah story, I've come to the place where I know God accepts me, loves me and wants to use me for the glory of His Kingdom. I've building my faith by consistently focusing on God and His promises to me. I've constantly working through everything I've discussed in this book. I'm not perfect, nor will I ever be perfect, but I'm trying to obey God. I'm striving to make choices that honor and please God.

In closing, I know God has a plan for this Modern-Day Jonah and I know God has a plan for you! I know God wants to use us to build the Kingdom and glorify Him.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised." (Hebrews 10:23)

"For verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you." (Matthew 17:20b)

Action Steps to a Daily Walk

Use Bible Study Tools

Getting the right study tools will really help you understand the scriptures. I personally use BibleStudyTools.com. You can look up numerous things and you can also access the Matthew Henry Commentary.

Hebrew/Greek Study Bible

I personally use The Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible by Dr. Spiros Zodhiates. By studying the root word, I learn more and it has changed the way I study scriptures. I'm positive it will help you as well.

Ask God to Teach You

Constantly ask God to teach you and constantly expect Him to do it. Be willing and open to accept God's direction, even if you don't understand it.

Get a Journal

Write down your prayer requests and then write down when God answers your prayers and how He did it. Also, write down the things you are thankful for and how God has blessed you. Give God the glory He deserves.

Talk to God Openly

Tell God everything that's going on in your life. Tell Him your fears, your concerns, and your weaknesses. Tell Him when you don't like someone or tell Him when you want vengeance. Literally, talk to Him about everything.

Include God in Everything

Don't separate any part of your life from God. You don't have to carry your Bible around with you but you can carry His wisdom with you.

Pray Without Ceasing

You can talk with God while you are mowing the lawn, folding laundry, having a business meeting, or no matter what you are doing.

Write Out Scriptures

It's always good to remind yourself of what God's word says. Write it out on your mirror in your bathroom, write it out on a note card and put it on the dash of your car, write it out and put it on your desk at work. Memorize these scriptures, commit them to your heart.

Schedule a Specific Time with God

It's a choice and it's time to make time for God. You need to mark down specific times on your calendar and then make sure you follow through. The more time you spend with God the more time you will want to spend with Him.

Fellowship with Other Believers

Every Christian needs fellowship. When we fellowship with others it creates a bond and gives us a common purpose. It also gives us a support system to help us, to guide us and to give us counsel.

*Do you want to work on this in your life?
Refer to the Handling Life Program on page 123 to get started.*

Implementing a Daily Walk

*Your 5 Daily Devotionals can be found
on pages 190 – 199*

ABOUT HANDLING LIFE

HANDLING LIFE IS A NON-PROFIT MINISTRY focused on helping others “handle life” by applying God’s word to their lives. All Handling Life materials are from a Bible-Based, Christ-Centered perspective. Handling Life reaches people through speaking, conferences, social media, videos, radio, podcasts, blogs, websites, and emails.

Please prayerfully consider partnering with Handling Life in three areas:

1. *Pray* that God continues to use me, my story and the Handling Life program to impact others for the Kingdom.
2. *Support* Handling Life financially. All donations are 100% tax-deductible. Handling-Life.com/Donate
3. *Encourage* your family, friends, and associates to support Handling Life with their prayers and financial support.

HANDLING LIFE STATEMENT OF FAITH

We believe in God the Father, God the Son,
and God the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity, the virgin birth,
and the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We believe the Holy Bible is the inspired,
infallible and inerrant Word of God.

We believe the Bible reveals God, the fall of man,
the way of salvation, and God's plan and purpose in the ages.

We believe salvation is "by grace" plus nothing.
The conditions for salvation are repentance and faith.

We believe all men are justified by faith alone
and are accounted righteous before God only through the merit
of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and His shed blood.

The Handling Life Program

A Word from the Author

Just a few years ago I felt like my life was literally falling apart. I was stressed out and anxious all the time and it seemed I was constantly dealing with conflict. I was always seeking happiness and stability but ending up with misery and headaches. It seemed no matter what I did or how I did it, I could never get all the pieces of the puzzle to fit together.

What was my problem? I wasn't out getting drunk or cheating on my wife and from all practical worldly standpoints, I was a good person.

My problem was I chose to do things my way. I wasn't actively trying to develop a relationship with God nor was I actively applying His word to my life. I choose to be a Modern-Day Jonah and my decisions caused "storms" in my life and in the lives of those around me.

Why did I choose to do things my way? Two main reasons. First, the thought of giving God control didn't fit in my life. In my mind, I fought the thought of giving God control because I didn't want to subject myself to a bunch of "laws and rules."

Second, there were so many conflicting feelings, emotions and thoughts running through my head. The thought of coming back to God was overwhelming and always caused me to lose my breath. All I could think about were ALL the things I was going to have to do and ALL the things I was going to have to make right.

So, it was just "easier" to ignore everything and go about my life. Then the actions of my decisions started catching up with me and the reality of my life started hitting me hard. I wasn't in control of my life and ALL the things I was trying to avoid were worse than the things I needed to deal with.

Do you know what happened as I started giving God more control? As I started doing things His way? I actually started getting control in my life. Sure, it doesn't make sense from the human mindset, but if you have every experienced you know exactly what I'm talking about and hey, it makes perfect sense from God's word. Now, please know I haven't perfected this, nor will I ever perfect it. However, I now realize this is a moment by

moment process and every decision I make, every word I speak, everything I do is a choice. I can either do it God's way or I can do it my way.

I know if I am spending time in God's word and praying, I have a better chance of doing it His way. However, if I'm not spending time with God, I know my flesh is going to take over and the choice is going to be doing things my way.

I don't know exactly what's going on in your life or in your mind. I'm not sure what choices you have made BUT I know the "things" you have going on in your life are the same and I know the solution to your situation is the same.

I produced this program because God placed a burden in my heart to share with you the process, the struggles, and the steps I went through when turning back to God. Please know, when God first laid this on my heart, I thought surely I'm not understanding this correctly. I mean why would I want to share my failures and struggles with others? Simply. God wants me to tell you that you are NOT alone! You might feel alone, you might feel like no one would understand or you might feel like everyone is going to judge you BUT let me assure you of something—God has never left you, nor will He and any brother or sister in Christ who judges you will answer to God for their actions.

Christians are called to help others and thankfully God placed a Godly friend in my life who helped me. Over a two-year period, he met with me almost weekly, and he listened to me, he talked with me, he shared scriptures with me, and not once did he ever judge me or tell others of my struggles. I know with 100% certainty that God restored me BUT I also know with 100% certainty that my brother in Christ helped me get to where I am today.

Now I want to help you. My goal is to help walk you through the process, to challenge you, to encourage you, to be a Godly friend who simply helps you overcome the hump like my friend helped me.

Please know, I'm not preaching at you, I'm extending a hand to help you through this process. My prayer and hope is this program and materials will give you the strength and courage to turn back to God! As a brother in Christ I want you to know God loves you, and He cares for you and He wants you to return to Him.

Not sure this is for you? Don't worry, at one time I wasn't sure it was for me.

Let me challenge you this one simple question, "are you happy with the way your life is going?" Be completely honest with yourself. Don't shy away from it or rationalize away things. It's a simple question and I'm sure you know the answer.

You see, if you choose to stay on your current path, you can expect the storms to get worse like they did for Jonah. You can expect that life is going to continue getting harder and harder. Sure, things might get better for a season, and the storms break for a time period, but rest assured it won't be long the storms are back and you can expect them to be far worse.

Think about it, the current way, **your way**, isn't working. You aren't getting the results you expected. This is ultimately why I gave in. I was tired of doing things my way and getting results I didn't want.

At this point, you have two options:

1. Ignore God and His word, do nothing, and continue on your current path.
2. Obey God and His word, develop a relationship with Him and experience the joy, peace, comfort, harmony and balance which comes from having a relationship with Him.

Let me encourage you, it's time to stop delaying and it's time to take the necessary steps of turning back to God. It's time to start obeying Him and applying His word to your life. Just so you know, the solutions to your problems are quite simple, however, the implementation of these solutions is the hard part. Why? Because you can't serve two masters. You can't serve God and serve yourself. But I promise if you stick with it and do things God's way the discomfort is well worth it.

To access these materials online, visit HandlingLife.org/Program

Study Guide: Getting Started

As you know, when you are faced with handling overwhelming circumstances it's critical to have the necessary resources and training. There was a point in my life when I didn't know how to address the circumstances I was faced with. I knew what the Bible said and I had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ but I was embarrassed to admit to my wife I wasn't the man of God I claimed to be and I was struggling with the thought of giving God control because I didn't want to give up control.

The 7 Modules are designed to help you, challenge you, encourage you and bring you closer to God, to deepen your relationship with Him. You can do one module or all 7 or you can skip around. I would encourage you to do all 7 modules even if you don't believe you "need" them because you never know what God might reveal to you.

As you go through each module, there is a 5-Step Process which is structured to help you through each module. If you will apply this 5-Step Process you will be amazed how things change. This process will help you identify and clarify things in your life. The process will help you develop actions steps to create positive changes in your life.

The 7 modules are:

Module 1: Identifying "Where are you with God?"

Module 2: Addressing "Mind Games"

Module 3: Dealing with Pride

Module 4: Dealing with Forgiveness

Module 5: Developing Patience

Module 6: Apply the Right Wisdom

Module 7: Implementing a Daily Walk

The 5-Step Process is a proven, systematic approach which allows you to do things in the right order so you can achieve your desired result. This doesn't apply to just your spiritual life—it applies to your finances, your relationships, your health, and your work.

Please know, these steps are linear (they must go in that order), but they're not static—you can create an action plan to change (Step 3), and then a day or month later realize that it's not working and have to start over again! Or you can identify (Step 2) where your original problem came from, but maybe you realize you didn't dig quite deep enough and you missed the root issue.

Essentially, the 5-Step Process is the prescription needed to deal with the symptoms you've created in your life.

The 5-Step Process is:

Step 1: Confess: What's your role in the matter/problem?

Step 2: Identify: What's causing the matter/problem?

Step 3: Create: Action steps to address the matter/problem

Step 4: Implement: Put your plan into action.

Step 5: Reflect: What worked? What didn't?

Each Module contains:

- 5 devotionals
- Videos and audio files
- A chapter from Modern-Day Jonah
- A Worksheet

To access these materials, visit HandlingLife.org/Program

Handling Life Daily Devotionals

Each daily devotional opens with a passage of scripture, followed by my insights related to that scripture. After the insight, you will be asked three questions which are geared to make you consider and reflect. These questions will invite you to **confess, identify,** and **create** solutions to improve your life. Don't overthink these reflections—your first response is often the right one and it's best if you can pick a specific problem or issue and work in that area. At the end of each devotional is a prayer which focuses on the overall theme of the devotional.

Let me encourage you, don't get stuck, don't delay! Just start. Choose an area of your life you want to work on and dig in!

After you have done the first 3-steps, don't forget Steps 4 (**Implement**) and 5 (**Reflect**). Implementation is where the rubber meets the road. It's where you are taking knowledge (God's word) and applying it (God's wisdom) to your life. Then reflection is looking back and making sure your executing it the right way and it's having a Godly outcome.

Lastly, this is a problem-solving approach that is meant to help you to dig in and identify what's causing your issues so you can correct them. These materials are meant to challenge you but not offend you. They are developed out of my own personal story and I felt led by God to develop them and share them with you. At times, things might get uncomfortable or you might feel like you're being judged, but please know, everything I've created is created in God's love in an effort to help you.

To access these materials, visit HandlingLife.org/Program

Daily Devotionals Worksheets:

Where Are You with God: Days 1 - 5

(Pages 130 to 139)

Mind Games: Days 1 - 5

(Pages 140 to 149)

Dealing with Pride: Days 1 - 5

(Pages 150 to 159)

Dealing with Forgiveness: Days 1 - 5

(Pages 160 to 169)

Dealing with Patience: Days 1 - 5

(Pages 170 to 179)

Wisdom Matters: Days 1 - 5

(Pages 180 to 189)

Daily Walk: Days 1 - 5

(Pages 190 to 199)

Where Are You with God: Day 1

Scripture: *“And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”* (Judges 6:13)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Have you ever thought about how the story of Gideon applies to your life? Gideon struggled to trust God and His plan so much so that he demanded God show him various signs. How did God respond? He showed Gideon numerous signs and each time Gideon wanted to see more. The amazing thing is God didn’t give up on Gideon; He didn’t get frustrated and walk away.

Just like Gideon, I’ve had a hard time believing and trusting God. Thankfully, God has been patient with me and hasn’t given up on me.

God hasn’t given up on you either. He’s waiting for you to buckle down and invest time in building your relationship with Him. Once you do this, He will use you in a mighty way, just as He used Gideon.

Reflection:

Confess: Where are you with God? Pour out your heart. Write it all down and be honest because God already knows.

Identify: How did you get here? What has gotten between you and God? Or what have you let get between you and God?

Create: List things you can either start doing or stop doing to get closer to God.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for being patient with me and thank You for not getting frustrated and walking away when I question You or don't immediately do what you've asked me to do. Please help me develop my relationship with You so my life can be honoring and glorifying to you.

Where Are You with God: Day 2

Scripture: *“And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.”*
(Luke 15:13)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: At one point in my life I had the mindset that money was the solution to my problems. I thought “If I could just make more money, then I could find happiness.” For a time period, my thought process was accurate: money did resolve many of my issues. Unfortunately, money didn’t resolve my root problem. Why? Because my focus and love of money led me away from the Lord.

The prodigal son had the same thought. He wasn’t happy or content where he was, so he thought he could take his money and go live the life he wanted. You know how that story ends right? He ends up broke lying in a pig pen.

Are you headed down this path? If so, consider changing directions immediately because money isn’t going to solve your problems. Sure, it might solve your problems for a season, but I guarantee you in the long run the pursuit of money (and the excessive spending of it) is only going to cause more problems.

Reflection:

Confess: What are you relying on to resolve your problems?
(money, shopping, job, friends)

Identify: Why are you relying on “your thing” verses relying on God? Is it a trust issue? A faith issue? A stubbornness issue?

Create: If you feel like “your thing” has too much power over you, your relationships, or your life, what are the steps you need to take to start relying on God?

Prayer: Lord, I love You and need You in my life. Help me to stop relying on my own solutions. I know I need to rely on you and I know until I do my life is going to be full of stress, misery, and conflict. I’m ready and willing to focus on my relationship with You because I want a life full of peace, joy, and contentment.

Where Are You with God: Day 3

Scripture: *“The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing, but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.”*
(Proverbs 13:4)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Procrastination is the action of delaying or postponing something, and rarely is the word procrastination associated with success. Why? Because procrastination almost always leads to failure, anxiety, issues, or trouble.

I’ve been a procrastinator my entire life. I’ve waited until the last minute to do a task and then wondered why I didn’t get the results I desired. In college, I waited until the 5th week, 6th day and 23rd hour to do my term paper that I’d known about for 6 weeks. How did this work out? Well, I caused myself undue stress and my work was subpar because I rushed to get it done.

What does procrastination have to do with our relationship with God? God has told us to study His word and pray without ceasing, but when we put it off, we make poor decisions and create problems in our lives. We create undue stress and subpar results.

Reflection:

Confess: How have you procrastinated with prayer and studying God's word?

Identify: When, if ever, have you found yourself motivated to pray more consistently and study your bible? Did anyone or anything help support this commitment to become closer to God (i.e. Sunday School, men's group, weekly bible study, etc.?) Are you only praying when you mess up?

Create: When you find yourself procrastinating about prayer and studying God's word, how can you gently encourage yourself to commit? What support network or tools might be able to help your commitment?

Prayer: Lord, help me to stop procrastinating in my life. I've created unnecessary and unwanted issues because I've not taken the time to develop my relationship with You. I'm committed to developing my relationship with You by making time each day to study Your word and pray.

Where Are You with God: Day 4

Scripture: *“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: When I want something, I don’t have much patience. I want it sooner than later and I don’t want to wait. This type of attitude definitely doesn’t fit well within God’s plan because I had become so focused on what I wanted verses what God had planned for me. My “prayers” focused on what I wanted and what happened when my prayers weren’t answered? I felt like God wasn’t listening to me and definitely wasn’t answering my prayers.

Think about how Moses felt at the Red Sea. Moses had done exactly what God asked him to do. He led the Israelites out of Egypt and now the Egyptians are bearing down on them, there are mountains on both sides and the Red Sea is too deep to cross. There is nowhere for Moses to go; he is boxed in.

At this point, Moses has a huge decision to make. He can’t cross the mountains, he can’t cross the Red Sea, and returning to Egypt means returning to slavery. What did Moses do? He patiently waited on the Lord. Can you imagine the look on Moses’ face when God split the Red Sea? You know Moses never saw that coming!

Reflection:

Confess: How do you feel when you pray unceasingly to God for something and you feel like those prayers go unanswered?

Identify: When have you been frustrated by unanswered prayers in the past? Was this prayer in line with God's will? Were you praying for a specific answer instead of being open to God's answer?

Create: How might you practice more patience with God in the future? And how can you make sure what you're praying for is His will?

Prayer: Lord, help me to await Your will, Your way, and Your wisdom like Moses did. I know to achieve this I must be diligent in studying Your word and developing my prayer life. I know I must set aside time each to study Your word and I know I must pray/communicate with You throughout the day. I know I must be open to having my prayers answered in a way I don't expect.

Where Are You with God: Day 5

Scripture: *“In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”*
(Judges 17:6)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: I look back over my life and regret not serving God as I should have. Why? Because I caused myself and others misery and heartache and this could have been avoided. I chose to do what I thought was right and my words and actions caused unnecessary pain and suffering.

Are your choices creating misery, heartache, pain or suffering for yourself and/or others? Take a minute and consider the story of Samson. Samson struggled with serving God on and off his entire life. When Samson was away from God he caused himself major issues for himself and everyone around him, but when Samson was serving God, he was at peace and ruled as a judge over Israel for 20 years.

Reflection:

Confess: Which of your choices, words or actions are creating misery, heartache, pain, and suffering to yourself or someone close to you?

Identify: Think about an area in your life where you feel most “selfish”. Where do you think that feeling came from? What created it?

Create: What are you going to do to resolve the matter? Is your way working? Why not consider creating a game plan based on God’s word?

Prayer: Lord, I need help in keeping my mind focused on you. I know when I’m not serving you I’m hurting myself and those around me. Let me remember that true peace, joy and rest comes through my relationship with You.

Mind Games: Day 1

Scripture: *“Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.” (Psalm 35:17-18)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: At times, I’ve felt like God abandoned me and He didn’t care what was going on in my life because I had either strayed too far from Him or I was not doing what He wanted me to do.

I found it easier to blame God for “abandoning” me in my time of need than to take responsibilities for my actions. I was literally blaming God for my circumstances and the truth was I didn’t have the right to blame God. God hadn’t left me or abandoned me—I had left Him and abandoned Him. I had let my feelings and thoughts of betrayal keep me from getting right with God.

Look at the life of Joseph. He had been sold into SLAVERY by his brother and from an earthly standpoint, he had every right to feel betrayed by God and he had every reason to be angry and bitter with God. Yet Joseph chose to trust God and His plan. Joseph chose to forgive and show the love of Christ to others.

Can you imagine how different Joseph would have been had he gotten angry and bitter? Can you imagine how different we would be if we weren’t bitter over that “thing” which happened to us?

Reflection:

Confess: What betrayal, hurt or life event are you holding onto?

Identify: Does this betrayal, hurt or life event apply to just one person/situation, or have you had other experiences like it in your past? Essentially, what's driving your thought process and what's the basis for your reactions?

Create: When you think of the person or situation, try something new. Instead of focusing on the negative, start praying for the situation or the person. You will be surprised what God can do when you get out of the way.

Prayer: Lord, I'm angry, upset and bitter and this is hurting my relationship with you. The thought of having to deal with "everything" is simply overwhelming. I know I need to let go of my anger and bitterness and I the only way to accomplish this is through YOU.

Mind Games: Day 2

Scripture: *“And let the peace of God rule in Your hearts, to that which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”* (Colossians 3:15)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: I love the story of Daniel. It’s so encouraging and shows God has our backs when we serve Him. Does this mean God protects us from all bad things? Nope. It means God protects us during the bad things.

Daniel had to decide between serving God or disobeying the King. Can you imagine the thoughts running through Daniel’s mind? I’m sure he was thinking things like “I can’t pray to God. It could cost me my life.” Ultimately, Daniel chose to serve God faithfully and diligently without hesitation or care for his personal well-being and what did God do in return? God protected Daniel during his time of need.

Reflection:

Confess: What's standing in your way of you praying and communicating with God? What are you afraid of?

Identify: When is the last time you were close to God? How were your life and actions when you were close to God?

Create: What is one step you could take now to improve your prayer life with God?

Prayer: Lord, I need to spend more time with You. I want to develop a prayer life and a faith like Daniel's. I'm not sure what my day or week holds and I'm uncertain about how to handle things, but I know Your way is the best and I know I must dig in and establish my life on Your word.

Mind Games: Day 3

Scripture: *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.” (Matthew 15:8)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: This is hard to admit but at times I drift away from God. I will start watching TV, or updating my Facebook account, or playing Candy Crush and then the thought of “I know I need to spend time in His word” hits me and instead of spending time with God, I will continue doing other things.

My actions create a slow drift from God and my choices create issues and circumstances in my life. This leads me to thinking “why has God left me?”

What’s the real issue here? Is it God or me? It’s me. I’ve drifted away from God. The truth is God is never changing and He has never left me, nor will he.

Think about it this way: the more we rationalize and tolerate sin, the further we drift away from God.

Reflection:

Confess: What is causing your slow drift away from God?

Identify: What are you focusing on which is causing you to slowly drift from God?

Create: What are you willing to do to stop your drift way from God?

Prayer: Lord, I know I have a tendency to drift away from You and Your will for my life. I am tired and feel like my life is falling apart. I'm trying my best to hold it all together but it isn't working. I know I need to draw near to You and apply Your word to my life. Please give me strength to stay anchored in Your word and please give me the courage to do what I need to do.

Mind Games: Day 4

Scripture: *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (Galatians 6:7-8)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: As I started giving God control of my life I had to face various consequences from past actions and it wasn’t long before I had thoughts of “Why is God punishing me?” This will happen to you as well. It will cause you to pause and consider whether the process is worth it. It will possibly dominate your thoughts at times.

When this happened to me, I took the approach of writing down the truth. I wrote out what was the issue I was faced with and what had caused it. Then when I started feeling like God was punishing me I would pull out my journal and remind myself of what was really going on.

First, God isn’t punishing you. He loves you and will give you the strength, knowledge and wisdom to handle your current circumstances and everything God does is done in love. Second, you must be honest about what you are going through. Is it a Job or Jonah situation?

Look at the story of Esau. Esau had an immediate need so he decided to sell his birthright to meet his need. He had no regard for how his decision would affect the rest of his life and it was something he had to live with. God wasn’t punishing him. Esau had to live with his decision, he had to reap what he sowed.

Reflection:

Confess: What actions (not Job, but Jonah) have caused consequences in your life?

Identify: Were your actions justified? Did your actions contradict God's word? And did you feel like God was punishing you for your actions?

Create: The next time you're feeling punished or persecuted, write out the steps that led to that feeling. What decisions or actions did you make? What actions did others make? What is your responsibility in the situation? What can you do different next time to avoid the situation?

Prayer: Lord, I know you love me and care for me and I need your help to handle the situations I've created in my life. Give me courage and strength to address the issues I've caused in my life.

Mind Games: Day 5

Scripture: *“Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.”* (Deuteronomy 12:2-3)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: There is a difference between trying to serve God and simply not trying at all. You can’t ride the fence. Why? Because when you are a “split rail Christian” you will get splinters!

Think about the story of King David and the ark of God. When King David was bringing the ark back to Jerusalem he failed to do everything God asked him to do. How? Halfway through the task David decided he knew better than God and did things his way.

I’m guilty of doing this in my life. I make a choice to do things my way instead of doing them God’s way. Let me encourage you: it’s time to stop doing things your way and start doing things God’s way.

Reflection:

Confess: What “things” are you doing your way instead of God’s way?

Identify: What are you trying to avoid when you’re focusing on these things?

Create: Name one way you can pause before reaching for an activity that keeps you from your relationship with God (shopping, food, alcohol, your phone).

Prayer: Lord, I want my entire life to be focused on You. I know Your way is the best and I know I need to start doing things your way. I know You know best and I pray I will allow You to guide me and direct me.

Dealing with Pride: Day 1

Scripture: *“Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”* (Proverbs 16:18)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: For years, I convinced myself I was a strong Christian and loved the Lord and everything was where it needed to be. However, my actions and words told another story—my fruit and tree didn’t match up.

What was my problem? PRIDE. I didn’t want to admit my choices, my actions and my words had created the life I was currently living.

Why didn’t I want to deal with my pride? Simple. I didn’t want to give God control because to me, that meant I would have to give up control. The irony of the matter is by not obeying God and applying His word to my life I had lost control of my life.

I got the storms promised to me in James 3 because I let my self-centeredness and pride keep me from doing things God’s way. If you are ready to address the storms in your life, then you must deal with your pride and self-centeredness.

Reflection:

Confess: How is your pride, ego, and self-centeredness affecting your life? How is it affecting others in your life?

Identify: What areas of your life is your pride or ego showing up too frequently? (i.e. work, your relationship with your spouse or kids, at church, etc.)

Create: Determine the different between “selfish” in a positive way (meditation, prayer, time to read and reflect, exercise, etc.) and “selfish” in a negative way (not helping others, not paying attention, short temper). Then make a list of all the positive things and focus on doing those on a daily basis.

Prayer: Lord, I know my pride has caused problems in my life and I'm ready to start addressing it. I'm overwhelmed and exhausted, my burden is heavy and my heart is aching. I'm not sure what to do other than call out Your name and ask for Your help and guidance. Please help me to address my pride!

Dealing with Pride: Day 2

Scripture: *“But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.”*
(Galatians 6:4)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: When we are not humble before the Lord, we become very arrogant about our achievements. Is this bad? Absolutely! Why? Because we have made it about ourselves, instead of about God.

Is working hard and achieving success bad? No! But when your success leads you away from God it is. When your success causes you to compare yourself to others and their achievements it is.

Stop comparing your life to others! I guarantee if you do this, your life will be better and more fulfilled. Try this, start focusing on building others up and helping them! This concept is found in Philippians 2:3, “let each esteem others better than themselves.”

Reflection:

Confess: Who in your life should you be encouraging and building up?

Identify: Why are you comparing yourself to others? What are you trying to prove?

Create: Think about who you can praise in your life—at work or at home. For the next 5 days, commit to directly praising and extending gratitude to someone, either in person, email, or by phone. What did you notice about your relationship with them? How did that behavior make you feel?

Prayer: Lord, thank You for the talents You have given and thank You for allowing me to do the things I do. Help me to be humble and gracious and help me to focus on building others up and helping them instead of comparing myself to them.

Dealing with Pride: Day 3

Scripture: *“Proud and haughty scorner is his name, who dealeth in proud wrath.”* (Proverbs 21:24)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: I reached a point where my “issues” were always because OTHER people were wrong—it was NEVER me. Over time, do you know what happened? I convinced myself the only way to address this was to beat them. If someone wanted to argue, then I needed to win the argument by being louder, harsher, or faster to the punch and if that didn’t work then I hired an attorney.

I became convinced the only way to be successful was to operate the way the world operated. Was there anything wrong with this? Well, yes and no. There was nothing wrong with this from an earthly standpoint but there was everything wrong with it from a Godly standpoint.

My pride kept me from seeking out God’s wisdom and applying it to my life, and my choices created a life full of chaos, stress and conflict. My pride cost me dearly and it was 100% my choice.

Reflection:

Confess: When have you felt self-righteously correct in your actions?

Identify: If you had to step into their shoes and take their side for a moment, how might THEY see YOU? Would they see Christ in your actions?

Create: Next time you want to launch into “Win-Lose” thinking (“THEY’RE wrong, and I’M right!”), write or talk out the argument from their point of view. Where might you meet in the middle and find a solution that works for both of you? Then consider how would God want you to respond?

Prayer: Lord, my thoughts has been on everything except You. I’ve blamed others for their actions but not consider my actions and this isn’t right. Please forgive me for my actions and develop a passion within me to serve You and take responsibility for my actions and words. Let my thoughts and actions be pleasing unto You.

Dealing with Pride: Day 4

Scripture: *“But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” (1 Timothy 5:8)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: When you start putting your own needs before God you have problems. When you start putting your own needs before your spouse you have problems. Most of the time, you don’t verbally say, “today I’m going to ignore God and my family and do exactly what I want to do.” However, through your actions you say it loud and clear!

For example, are you a workaholic who has convinced yourself that all your work is for your family? You work 60 hours a week at the office and another 30 or more at home. You are constantly connected to work. I’ve been there and I convinced myself that providing for my family was my #1 priority. So, be honest, is all your hard work and money creating an amazing relationship with your family? No, it’s not.

It’s time to make your relationship with God more important than your relationship with work and money.

Reflection:

Confess: What are you putting in front of your relationship with God? Or what's keeping you from seeking out God?

Identify: When did this out-of-balance "thing" start happening? What made you stop focusing on your relationship with God?

Create: Imagine your day tomorrow. What small thing can you add or take away to your schedule that will bring you more balance?

Prayer: Lord, thank You for my family and friends. I greatly appreciate the support structure You have given me in my life. From this moment forward, I'm going to start making You my top priority and then connecting to my family and friends my next priority.

Dealing with Pride: Day 5

Scripture: *“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”* (Philippians 2:4)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: It’s a struggle to put another’s needs in front of yours. Why? Because we are self-centered humans and we tend to care more about ourselves than others. However, when we don’t put others in front of us it causes issues. Please know this doesn’t mean you have to let people walk all over you. I’m talking about putting others in front in a Godly, biblical way.

I’ll be honest, I struggle with putting others needs in front of my mine. I’ve struggled with this over the years with my wife. Not because I don’t love her, but because I thought if I did things the traditional way I would get the results I wanted.

For a time period this method worked, but over time, she came to resent my methods. My work ultimately lead me to ignore her which meant she wasn’t getting the attention she deserved. In my opinion, nothing is worse than being physically present, but mentally absent.

But I’ve got AWESOME news though! Once I started treating my wife God’s way, guess what happened? She started getting what she deserved and needed and this lead to me getting what I needed.

Reflection:

Confess: How has your pride negatively impacted your relationships? Be as specific as possible.

Identify: What negative thought pattern did you have that was getting in the middle of your relationship?

Create: Moving forward, how can you pause or erase prideful thoughts when they start getting in the middle of your relationship? What's the plan to address current relationships?

Prayer: Lord, help me treat my spouse and family the right way. I know my actions have hurt them and I know I need to change my ways. Help me to value and love them and help me do things the right way—YOUR WAY!

Dealing with Forgiveness: Day 1

Scripture: *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.” (Acts 3:19)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: You know the story: Jesus is hanging on the cross and there is a sinner on His right and a sinner on His left. What happened with these two men? One rejected Jesus while the other man acknowledged his need for Jesus, asked for forgiveness, and accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

You see, the one who rejected Jesus let his pride rule his life, while the other dropped his pride and admitted he needed Jesus. Is pride ruling your life and keeping you from what Jesus has planned?

For years, I struggled with the thought that “I had gone too far to come back.” I was paralyzed and couldn’t ask God to forgive me. I was literally “afraid” to tell God of my sins because I wondered what He would say or what He would think of me.

Sounds silly right? But if you have ever been there you know exactly what I’m talking about. The sad part is I already knew that God knows EVERYTHING. When He sent Jesus to die for me He already knew I was a wretched sinner.

Guess what? God already knows ALL your sins. He knows your struggles and He knows you have a pride problem. So, why not go ahead and drop your pride, admit your wrongs, confess your sins, and get right with God?

Reflection:

Confess: What's holding you back from admitting to God your wrong? When have you asked God for forgiveness?

Identify: What's the reason you believe God won't forgive you? Could it be that you don't want to deal with the issue and it really has nothing to do with God? Did you ever have the thought that you did things that God wasn't able to forgive you for? How did that make you feel?

Create: Write down a list of things that make you feel ashamed or guilty from your past or present. Allow God to wash away those sins. He forgives you.

Prayer: Lord, I struggle with asking you to forgive me for the things I've done and things I've said. I know you are willing to forgive me and I thank you for your mercy and grace. Thank you for sending Jesus to die on the cross for me and please give me the strength to trust you and your word.

Dealing with Forgiveness: Day 2

Scripture: *“So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses.”* (Matthew 18:35)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: I’ve been done wrong before and the person who did me wrong never apologized nor did they even think they had done anything wrong. Honestly, this has always bothered me because when I’m done wrong I either want an apology or I want a pound of flesh.

If it’s an argument, I want to have the last word. If it’s a disagreement, I want the other person to admit I’m right and they’re wrong. I think almost everyone feels this way, but is it what God wants? Nope. God wants us to be Christ-like and by not forgiving others it produces bitterness in our lives. It takes our focus off God and puts it on us.

Forgiving someone is a choice. Remember the story of Joseph? His brothers sold him into slavery and Joseph choose to forgive them. His choice allowed God to use him in a mighty way. Let me encourage you, don’t let your emotions or the need for vengeance keep you from forgiving others.

Reflection:

Confess: What bitterness do you need to let go of? Who do you need to forgive?

Identify: Why are you holding onto this situation or incident? Has this choice made you a better person or a bitter person? What was the incident (or series of incidents) with this person that allowed the bitterness to take root and grow in you?

Create: Write a letter forgiving this person and then turn the matter over to God. You don't have to send it but writing it down will help you. Realize that it's possible they might feel they need to forgive you too (rarely does one ever think they're the bad guy in any situation!) Allow the letter to release you from your feelings of bitterness and anger and find empathy for where they might be struggling.

Prayer: Lord, I'm bitter and I'm hurting. I've been done wrong numerous times in my life and it hasn't been fair. It's caused me to struggle in my life and I've not been willing to forgive. With Your help I'm going to work hard on forgiving others. Through You, I'm going to forgive those who have done me wrong, even if they don't ask for forgiveness.

Dealing with Forgiveness: Day 3

Scripture: *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* (James 5:16)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: As a red-blooded human this is really hard for me to do. I don’t like telling others of my short comings and I don’t like sharing when I’m the one who’s wrong.

One way I’ve rationalized my behavior is by convincing myself that my “wrong” justified because what I did was NOT as bad as what the other person did. Therefore, the other person was wrong and I was right. Can you relate?

I know this isn’t the type of behavior God wants for me because of what James 5:16 says. James tells me to confess my faults so I can be healed. Read that again, James tells me to confess my faults so I can be healed” Did you know the meaning of the word “healed” is “to alleviate a person’s distress or anguish.” You see, when you don’t ask to be forgiven guilt wears you down and starts to affect all aspects of your life.

Reflection:

Confess: Who do you need to apologize to or make things right with? Don't focus on what they did and don't rationalize your actions.

Identify: What convinced you that your actions were ok? What led to you believe you were right and they were wrong? Does God give you an out for your actions?

Create: Consider writing a letter—and sending it—to the person you treated badly. In it, own your mistakes and your behavior without blame or finding fault. Acknowledge where you went wrong and ask for their forgiveness. You can also email them, text them or call them.

Prayer: Lord, I'm a sinner. I've done things to others I shouldn't have done and I know I must ask them to forgive me. The thought of being embarrassed is overwhelming but I know I need to obey Your word and I need your strength and help.

Dealing with Forgiveness: Day 4

Scripture: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* (Romans 8:1)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: If you are saved, the Holy Spirit lives in you and He is willing and waiting to guide you. However, He can only do His job if you are willing to let Him. God’s word states that if we are in Christ we are “a new creature.”

Jesus died for you and me so we could spend eternity with Him, and when He died for you, He already knew every sin you would commit. So, it’s time to stop focusing on past sins and thinking that God could never forgive you or use you. Sure, you’ve messed up, made mistakes, and said and done things you shouldn’t have, but that simply means you are human. There is NOT one single Christian who hasn’t messed up.

Forgiving yourself is critical to your relationship with God. If God has forgiven you then you must forgive yourself. But continuing to live in past mistakes keeps you from serving God in the present.

Look at Jonah. He disobeyed God and didn’t go to Nineveh but what happened after he came back to God? God sent him to Nineveh and when the people of Nineveh heard about God they repented.

Reflection:

Confess: What do you need to forgive yourself for? What guilt are you holding onto?

Identify: Can you remember the first time you did something that you found unforgivable? What was it? Why do you believe God won't forgive you and restore you?

Create: Write yourself a letter forgiving yourself for your past wrongs. Give your burden to God and if you want, burn the letter. As the letter burns, ask God to take away your guilt and shame.

Prayer: Lord, I pray I will be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's voice and presence in my life. Please give me the strength to deal with my past actions. I know I need to stop living in the past and start serving You in the present.

Dealing with Forgiveness: Day 5

Scripture: *“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” (Colossians 3:13)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Holding a grudge is a simple thing to do; it can become second nature. However, do you know who doesn’t hold grudges? God. I’ve sinned tremendously against God, yet He doesn’t hold a grudge against me.

Let me ask you something: if God doesn’t hold grudges, then should you hold grudges? When we hold grudges it obstructs and hinders our walk with God. It allows burdens and hurt and pain to dominate our lives.

Scriptures are full of God telling us to forgive because forgiveness is a powerful tool given to use by God. It’s time to start holding grudges and let God start healing.

Reflection:

Confess: Who are you holding a grudge against? Do you see the conflict between you grudge and God's word?

Identify: What's your grudge accomplishing for you? Has it changed the other person?

Create: Make a list of all the grudges you are holding onto and then assign a Bible verse to each one (it's *ok* to have one verse or multiple verses). Now, commit to yourself that each time you think of these grudges you will remember Bible verse and you will start asking God to remove these grudges from your live.

Prayer: Lord, You see ALL my shortcomings and all the mistakes I make, yet You still forgive me and love me. Thank You. As I grow You in, please help me to forgive and love others the way You forgive me and love me.

Dealing with Patience: Day 1

Scripture: *“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.” (James 4:7-10)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Being “doubled minded” isn’t a smart way to live. It’s like going to a sporting event and wearing the away team’s jersey but sitting on the home team’s side. You cheer for your team but it can’t be heard!.

Trying to “serve” God while “doing” things your way is the same. God’s way is right and your way is wrong and the sooner you can admit this and start doing things God’s way, the sooner you will start seeing the benefits in your life

Remember, the moment you repent your sins you, God fully forgives you and restores you. However, that doesn’t mean God takes away the consequences of your actions, but He also doesn’t leave you alone to deal with them. This is why true patience is critical and this type of patience is only available through your relationship with God.

Reflection:

Confess: What do you do when you get impatient? Get irritable with your family? Say something you shouldn't?

Identify: Why are you so impatient? What impact does your impatience have on those around you?

Create: How can you create space between that feeling of impatience and immediately reacting to it? What would happen if you take 5 minutes or 5 days before reacting or making a decision?

Prayer: Lord, I need patience in my life. Let me be patient and wait on You. Give me the strength to focus on You and not be double minded. Help me to make the right decisions in my life.

Dealing with Patience: Day 2

Scripture: *“A soft answer turns away wrath.”* (Proverbs 15:1a)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: I’ve read “a soft answer turns away wrath” hundreds of times but it took me a LONG time to put this simple biblical principle into practice. It’s such a simple statement but one that if violated will cause untold issues. I look back over the years and oh, the bridges I burned, the people I hurt and the arguments I engaged in.

I wish I could go back in time and apply this simple, yet powerful principle in my life! I could have avoided so many different situations. Not being patient in my response cost me my testimony but ultimately, it kept my focus off God.

Here’s something I’ve been working on in my life and something you can try. I wait up to 24 hours to respond to a text or email; this way I don’t say anything I will regret. I’m also working on not saying anything if I can’t say something nice—that seems to be a little more challenging! The goal is to conform to God’s word and glorify Him.

Reflection:

Confess: What “wrath” could you have avoided had you applied “a soft answer turns away wrath” to your life?

Identify: If you’re quick to anger or sharp words, where do you think that comes from? How did your parents handle conflict or emotional outbursts? Do you feel justified in your actions because of what the other person did?

Create: What strategies could you use to respond with “a soft answer”? Are you willing to make a conscious choice to not engage?

Prayer: Lord, my lack of patience and responses causes me trouble, creates conflict, and hurts others. I know it’s critical for me to start applying Your word to my life. Please help me conform to Your word and apply this verse to my life.

Dealing with Patience: Day 3

Scripture: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* (Hebrews 11:1)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: It’s imperative to be patient and have faith in God and His plan. I know this is easy to say and I know it’s hard to do. Not because of God but because of me. However, as my relationship with God has developed, so have my “things hoped for.” As time passes, the desires of my heart have changed and so has my stress level.

Once upon a time, I use to desire more money and bigger contracts, but now I desire a deeper relationship with God, I desire more time with my family and I desire to be a Godly example to others. I know God’s plan for my life is SO much better than mine and I’m ready and willing for God to do impossible things with me.

I want you to allow God to do great and mighty things in your life, but for this to happen, you must be willing to do things the way God wants them done.

Reflection:

Confess: What impossible thing has God done for you?

Identify: What issues have you caused in your life because you weren't patient?

Create: Why not decide upfront how you are going to respond to situations? What does God have planned for you? Misery or peace?

Prayer: Lord, I struggle with doing Your will when I don't know Your plan. I know the only way to handle this is by developing my trust and faith in You. Please help me develop and strengthen my faith in You and let me praise You for the things You have done.

Dealing with Patience: Day 4

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

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Do you remember this song?

*This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine
This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine
Let it shine, Let it shine, Let it shine!*

It’s time to let your light shine and stop worrying what others think of you. God’s opinion is the only opinion which matters. The opinion of others does NOT matter!

Trust me, the more you let your light shine, the more joy, contentment, peace and balance you will have in your life. It’s time to buckle down and invest time in building your relationship with God. As you do this, it won’t be long before others will want to know what has brought about this change in you!

Reflection:

Confess: How are you letting your light shine? What things are you doing that dulls your light?

Identify: Think of a time or situation when you worried about what someone else thought of you. How did you react to that? How did they react to it? Did it help you to worry about what they thought?

Create: Think of one of your many God-given gifts that you haven't yet shared widely with the world. What is it? Create a timebound goal (like in 3-6 months) that will allow you to share that gift with others. It is listening to others? Praying for others? Taking food to others? How can you let your light shine?

Prayer: Lord, I've been called to let my light shine, to be an example to others. Help me to stop focusing on my plans or what others think of me. I know my light is the strongest, brightest and most consistent when I'm close to You, yet I struggle to be patient with Your plans for my life.

Dealing with Patience: Day 5

Scripture: *“Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”* (1 Thessalonians 5:14)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Humans are born as prideful, egotistical, self-centered individuals. It goes against our DNA to let someone else control our mind, our heart, and our actions. This is what got Adam and Eve into trouble. They choose to do what they wanted instead of what God wanted.

The GREAT news is when we accept Jesus in our heart, we are born again as a new creatures. Our sin nature is replaced with God’s nature but we still have a choice to make. We can choose to obey God or disobey God. When we aren’t developing and maintaining our relationship with God, we are more likely to disobey God.

When we ignore God, we are less likely to be patient with people. Why? Because pride and patience don’t mix. So, if you want to be patient with others then work on your relationship with God.

FYI—Do you know what I’ve found in my personal life when I’m ignoring God? I’m more patient with people I don’t know than with those who are closest to me.

Reflection:

Confess: What one person do you need to work on having more patience with?

Identify: Was there a turning point in your life when found yourself being less patient overall with others? Do you always find yourself being short with others around you?

Create: Imagine a recent situation where you were impatient with a loved one or coworker. Write down how you could have handled that interaction differently. How could you have responded to them with more patience and empathy?

Prayer: Lord, I know I need to work on being patient. Please help me develop techniques and strategies to deal with people and circumstances that frustrate me. I want true balance and peace in my life and I know this only comes through You.

Wisdom Matters: Day 1

Scripture: *“This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.”*
(James 3:15-16)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Over the years, I’ve read this verse dozens of times and always had the same thought. “I’m not out doing anything bad—I’m not out getting drunk, or using drugs, or cheating on my wife—so, I’m good!” What I didn’t consider was all the “other things” like my temper, my stress, my unwillingness to forgive and my stubbornness.

My choices were causing chaos and disorder in my life. They were causing my life to spin out of control. You see, instead of pursuing a deeper relationship with God, my pursuits were focused on worldly possessions and my selfish ambitions.

Then when I tried to “fix” things they only got worse. It didn’t matter what I did, it ultimately didn’t work. Why? Because I was applying my own solutions to my problems. Well, I thought they were problems when in fact they were just symptoms of my real problem. The real problem was I was NOT applying God’s wisdom to my life.

Reflection:

Confess: What daily choices are leading to stress and conflict in your life?

Identify: What area do you need to apply biblical wisdom to your life? Name something you could give up or change that would reduce the level of stress in your life (browsing social media, online shopping, obsessive TV watching, the nightly glass of alcohol, etc.)

Create: Try working on or changing 2 or 3 things for 30 days and journal about the process. How does it make you feel? What type of results do you see?

Prayer: Lord, it's time for me to choose Your wisdom over mine. I know I must stop worrying about things I can't control. It's time for me to start focusing on You and Your plan for my life.

Wisdom Matters: Day 2

Scripture: *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Honestly, one of the hardest things for me each day is take time to read God’s word and pray. I know the benefits but it’s like pulling teeth. The sad thing is I don’t struggle taking the time to do other things in my life. I can go play racquetball for hours or I can watch TV, but then I struggle to read God’s word for five minutes.

Is that how you feel? If you are going to get to know God, you are going to have to spend time getting to know God. I challenge you to make God first in your life and commit to making Him the #1 master in your life. You will be amazed at the results you see in your life.

Think about your relationship with God like this: just because you join a gym doesn’t mean you are going to get into shape. If you are going to get in shape, you must DO the work. Our relationship with God is NO different. We must apply Biblical wisdom to our lives moment by moment, situation by situation (even when you don’t feel like it or you don’t want to do it).

Reflection:

Confess: How much time do you take to read the bible and pray? Daily? Weekly? Monthly? Not just scan it? But read it and study it and consider how it applies to your life?

Identify: What the reason you don't want to spend time in God's word? Is there something you consider to be more important? Do you think turning back to God is too difficult or not worth the effort?

Create: Imagine having a morning routine that was just about self-care (exercise, bible study, meditation, prayer). How could you integrate time with God into this hour or so each morning? Try it for 2 weeks and see how each day goes.

Prayer: Lord, it's time for me to buckle down and develop a deeper relationship with You. It's time for me to deal with the "things" which are holding me back. Please give me the daily strength and diligence to make my relationship with You my top priority.

Wisdom Matters: Day 3

Scripture: *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*
(Proverbs 1:7)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: I grew up with the “thought” that God was just waiting to punish me when I messed up. The visual image I had was like the “Whack-a-Mole” game at the county fair. God’s fist was literally ready to come down and smash me when I did the wrong thing. Do you feel this way about God?

As I’ve grown spiritually, I’ve learned God loves me and He wants the best for me. He isn’t like the county fair game. Yes, He will correct me when I’ve done wrong, but it’s out of love, and grace, and mercy—not out of anger.

I challenge you to dig into God’s word and discover for yourself what God is about. Study His word and learn what God desires for you and what He promises in return. Please know I’ve had the exact thoughts you are having at this point. “But Nathan, if I give God control then I want ever get the things I want.”

Here’s the amazing thing, the closer I get to God the more my wants and desires change. As this happens, I get more peace and contentment in my life, which leads me to wanting to get to know God. Are you willing to give God’s way a try?

Reflection:

Confess: What areas in your life are you trying to control without God's help? What things are you doing your own way?

Identify: How has God blessed you in your life, especially when you didn't deserve it? List out three things.

Create: On a sheet of paper, list the areas you mentioned in "Confess". Then list the areas you mentioned in "Identify". What areas do you need to God's help? What are you going to change to make this happen?

Prayer: Lord, thank You for all You have done for me. As I draw closer to You, please build a hedge about me and those around me and let me be sensitive to what You are saying and where You are leading me. Give me a burning desire to give You control in all aspects of my life.

Wisdom Matters: Day 4

Scripture: *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.” (James 3:17-18)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: I was at a point in life that something had to give. I couldn’t go on the way I was living. I knew deep down God wanted more from me but I was scared. I had convinced myself that serving God would be boring, and hard, and filled with a bunch of rules and regulations. Boy, was I wrong!

The peace and joy I’ve experienced from doing things God’s way can’t be put into words. Oh how I wish I had given God control from the start.

I know the stress and misery you are experiencing. I’ve been there. The thought of changing is frightening. It’s truly a bizarre feeling but it’s time to be bold in your life! It’s time to make the choice to serve God, it’s time to put your fears aside, it’s time to stop worrying about what others will think, and it’s time to focus on applying God’s word to your life. The only way to find peace is through God.

I challenge you to give it all to God. I challenge you to find peace, contentment and joy in your life by serving God.

Reflection:

Confess: Are you ready to find true peace in your life? Are you tired of struggling all the time?

Identify: What steps do you need to take to address the pains in your life? What steps will help you peace in your life?

Create: Write down the actions steps you are going to take and make sure you list out the result you expect from these steps. As you go through the process, monitor the results and adjust your steps as needed.

Prayer: Lord, please forgive me for not applying Your wisdom to my life. I know I must stop giving in to my fears. I'm thankful for the life You have giving me and I'm going to work hard to make the changes I need to make.

Wisdom Matters: Day 5

Scripture: *“Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.”*
(Proverbs 15:22)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Sitting down with a brother in Christ and opening-up about all my fears, concerns, transgressions and questions was one of the hardest things I’ve ever done. Why? Because I had to admit to someone else that I was a sinner and a hypocrite. I had to admit I hadn’t been the man of God I had been called to be. It was incredibly hard and I didn’t know how he would respond or what he would think.

Do you know what he said? He didn’t give the traditional answer of “get in God’s word and pray” and everything will be ok. He said he was a sinner and hypocrite as well. Do you know what happened at that moment? We knew we could trust each other and we knew we could be honest with each other. For years, the thought of taking this very step had kept me pinned down but praise God I found someone who was able to provide me Godly counsel and then Godly friendship.

I want to encourage you to find someone who can do the same for you. If you are a Christian man, then find a Christian brother. If you are a Christian woman, then find a Christian sister. Find someone you can discuss life with—your struggles, your fears, your pain—and who you can be honest and real with. Find someone you can encourage and help. Someone who needs counsel just like you do.

The sooner you start being honest and sincere about things going on in your life, the sooner you will start seeking out God.

Reflection:

Confess: Do you have anyone in your life who provides you wise counsel without judgment? What's holding you back from being honest and vulnerable with someone?

Identify: When is the last time you had a relationship which provided you wisdom and guidance? What happened to that relationship? Why haven't you sought out another one?

Create: Identify a person who could provide you with wise counsel. Reach out to them and ask them to coffee or to get together.

Prayer: Lord, help me find someone who can provide me Godly counsel. Someone who will build me up and support my efforts to serve You. Someone I can be honest and real with.

Daily Walk: Day 1

Scripture: *“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.”* (James 4:3)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: For years, I went after what I wanted with little or no regard for God’s will in my life. My life from the outside though looked almost perfect. However, when you pulled the curtain back it was definitely not perfect. Internally, I was at “war” with myself and my choices were producing external “wars” in my life.

When this happened do you know what I did? I prayed to God that He would deliver me from my problems. I prayed He would allow me to be successful and make more money. You see, I was totally misusing the greatest tool God had given me—prayer.

But at the time I didn’t think about it that way. When my prayers weren’t answered I started questioning where was God and why wasn’t He answering my prayers. Overtime, I came to realize God wasn’t answering my prayers because they were selfish—I was asking “amiss.” I was only praying for my wants and my needs, I wasn’t praying for God’s will.

I realized I had to change how I prayed. I had to properly use the most powerful tool I’d been given and to do this I had to pray according to God’s word and His will for my life. I challenge you to do the same.

Reflection:

Confess: What are you praying for and why are you praying for it? Do you consider it to be God's will or something you want/need for yourself?

Identify: How are these actions affecting you and others around you? Why are you asking God to do these things? What should you be praying for which you aren't?

Create: Develop a prayer list which honors God and helps you develop your relationship with Him. Looking for resources on prayer? I highly recommend *"Lord, Teach Me to Pray in 28 Days"* by Kay Arthur and *"Approaching God's Throne—Biblical Protocols for Prayer"* by Harold Vaughan.

Prayer: Lord, as I grow in You, let my prayers be sincere and let my thoughts be pure. Help me to develop my prayer life and use it as a tool to serve You and deepen my relationship with You. Let my prayers be focused on Your will and your word, not my selfish desires.

Daily Walk: Day 2

Scripture: *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*

And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Colossians 3:12-17)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: WOW! This sounds like a lot of things, right? But there is something really cool going on here. Do you know what it is? God can do all these “things” through us when we are making the choice to do things His way.

How you ask? You see, the closer we get to God the EASIER it gets to implement these “things” into our lives. Through God, we are able to be merciful, kind, humble, meek, patient, forgiving, and we are able to show the love of Christ to others. Without God, we can do these things at times, but we can NOT sustain them.

Reflection:

Confess: What habits do you have that don't bring you closer to God? Are you willing to develop a habit of getting closer to God?

Identify: What the top 2 things you do to avoid getting closer to God?

Create: Developing a habit takes time and you can either have bad habits or good habits. Make the daily choice to develop the habit of walking with God and applying His word to your life. You will be amazed what happens in your life when you do this!

Prayer: Lord, thank You for forgiving me and thank You for being willing to use me. I pray I will let You have control and I pray I will develop a deeper relationship with You. I want the benefits You promise and I know I can't sustain them on my own.

Daily Walk: Day 3

Scripture: *“And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.” (Acts 9:26-27)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Have you ever walked into a room after you’ve done something wrong? It’s extremely intimidating and unsettling. Why? Because you know everyone knows what you did. Whether they are or not, you automatically assume they are staring at you and talking about you.

Can you imagine what Paul felt like after his conversion? He had come to know the Lord but he had spent years hunting down Christians and killing them. His reputation proceeded him and he wasn’t trusted or liked by other Christians—and rightfully so from an earthly standpoint.

Can you imagine how alone and afraid Paul felt? Have you ever felt alone and afraid? I have and this is why it’s important to be a friend and an encourager. Barnabas was a friend and encourager to Paul.

It took courage from God for Barnabas to put his arm around Paul, befriend him and trust him. I challenge you to be an encourager like Barnabas. Use your relationship with God to help others grow and develop their relationship with God. Be a Barnabas! You never know what someone else is going through.

Reflection:

Confess: What's holding you back from encouraging others? Do you not feel like you can? Or you do not feel like you should?

Identify: When did someone encourage you when you were struggling? When did you encourage someone when they were struggling? How did things turn out?

Create: Think of someone in your life who needs encouragement. Write out a dialogue of what you might say to them to give them more encouragement. Then consider giving it to them (Caution: Don't be judgmental, be encouraging).

Prayer: Lord, let me be a good steward of my time, let me to listen to others and let me be willing to help others in their time of need. Give me the strength and fortitude to step up and do what's right when it's needed. Let me be a Barnabas.

Daily Walk: Day 4

Scripture: *“O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever.”* (Psalm 106:1)

Nathan’s Personal Thought: Have you ever felt the joy of the Lord? I have and words can’t describe the feeling. Want to know the sad part? I still struggle to do things His way. I know if I stay in God’s word and apply His wisdom to my life, I will have the blessings He promises.

The one thing I’ve discovered is the more thankful I am, the easier it becomes to stay in God’s word. Are you thankful for what God has done for you? If not, it’s time to change your attitude and be thankful!

Why? Because God’s word commands it. Psalm 106:1 says “give thanks.” It’s time to stop looking like you have been sucking on lemons and start acting like a child of God. It’s time to start praising His name and telling EVERYONE how good God has been to you.

Reflection:

Confess: Why don't you have a grateful heart? How often are you thanking God for his goodness? How can you express more gratitude to God?

Identify: Have you ever had a gratitude practice? What was the result of intentionally practicing gratitude to God and others in your life?

Create: Having a grateful heart is a big predictor of happiness. Identify one or two ways you can practice gratitude each day—in your daily prayers, journaling, making a point of telling someone you appreciate them, sending a kind email, etc. Do this for 30 days and write down how it makes you feel.

Prayer: Lord, THANK YOU! Thank You for saving my soul, forgiving me, protecting me, blessing me, and loving me. Help me to change my attitude and develop a grateful heart. Help me to focus on all the things You have done for me and all the things You are going to do for me.

Daily Walk: Day 5

Scripture: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

Nathan’s Personal Thought: We have all heard the story of Joseph and how he forgave his brothers for selling him into slavery, but have you ever thought about how Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s Wife? A powerful, beautiful and confident woman tried to get him to sin. So, how did Joseph avoid this temptation?

Simple. He had answered the question before it was ever asked. He had made a choice to live his life for God. You see, before the temptation comes, and it will, you must establish your answer and commit to not changing it. You must establish your answer in advance or there’s no telling what you might do.

Let me encourage you, if you have active sin in your life, remove it. Stop letting it have control over you and stop letting your choices create storms in your life.

Reflection:

Confess: What are you doing that you shouldn't be doing? What do you have a hard time saying no to?

Identify: What's the root issue with your struggle? Why causes you to say yes to things that are wrong?

Create: Write out your personal “ten commandments”, your manifesto, or your rules for living—what “laws” in your life are unbreakable and unchangeable? What overarching principles help you to live your best life? Consider these your core, unchangeable values.

Prayer: Lord, I need to establish answers before the questions are asked so that I may flee temptation like Joseph did. To have this strength and fortitude, I must get in Your word and develop my relationship with You. Please help me make my relationship with You the top priority in my life.

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ABOUT NATHAN TABOR



First and foremost, I am a sinner saved by the grace of God. I am not perfect, I don't have all the answers, but I am striving to serve God. My overall desire in life is to serve God and be a Godly husband to my wife and a Godly father to my daughter.

In 1996, I earned my bachelor's degree in Psychology from St. Andrew's Presbyterian College; in 1998, I earned my master's degree in Public Policy from Regent University;

and in 2018, I received an honorary degree of D. Evan. Doctor of Evangelism from the Higher Learning Bible Institute.

Since 1999, I've had amazing successes and epic failures over the years in business. I've founded and operated more than two dozen businesses in the areas of commercial real estate acquisition and redevelopment, automobile sales, direct product sales, web-based marketing, and strategic partnership facilitation (NathanTabor.com).

In 2004, I ran for the US House of Representatives NC-5. I was honored to be endorsed by Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell, Bob Jones III and over 110 pastors in the district. Dr. Falwell referred to me as a "young Jesse Helms." Art Laffer and Steve Moore helped me develop my tax plan and endorsed my run for Congress. Unfortunately, I didn't win the primary, but God had a plan, He allowed me to meet the love of my life on the campaign trail.

In 2008, I founded Christmas Toy Drive which raises toys and clothing for children at Christmas time (ChristmasToyDrive.com); in 2010, I joined the Salvation Army Advisory Council in Winston-Salem and Kernersville, NC; and in 2011, I developed and published a comic book, *The Story Bible*, which contains 10 bible stories and 50 devotionals (TheStoryBible.com).

In 2014, I founded Handling Life and in 2017, I joined Liberty University as an Adjunct Professor, Helms School of Government.

I've been a featured guest on *Fox News*, *BiggerPockets*, *Fox and Friends*, *Laura Ingraham*, *Glenn Beck*, *C-Span Book TV* and many other radio and TV programs.

Speaking engagements include the Men's Prayer Advance, The Best Ever Conference, Impact Leadership, FreedomFest, CPAC, National Religious Broadcasters, NC Society of Surveyors, SC Society of Surveyors, the Leadership Institute, Center for Christian Statesmanship, numerous Chambers of Commerce and many other organizations.

I've served on the National Religious Broadcasters Board of Directors, chaired the National Religious Broadcasters Internet Committee for three years, and founded the National Religious Broadcasters Digital Media Summit.

I enjoy spending time with my family, playing racquetball, looking for shells on the beach and building furniture. I enjoy helping others, I enjoy solving problems, and I'm committed to maintaining work-life balance. That means working hard, but it also means spending time with my family, taking care of my health and enjoying my life, but most of ALL it means doing things God's way and in God's timing. It means I must make a daily choice to apply God's word to my life and trust His plan.

Just a few years ago I felt like my life was literally falling apart. I was stressed out and anxious most of the time and it seemed I was constantly dealing with conflict. I was always seeking happiness and balance but ending up with misery and headaches. It seemed no matter what I did or how I did it, I could never get all the pieces of the puzzle to fit together.

What was my problem? Simple. Like Jonah, I chose to do things my way instead of God's way and my choices lead to "storms" in my life and in the lives of those around me. You see, I knew I needed to get right with God, I just needed guidance. Is that where you are in your life?

The good news is you don't have to go through this on your own. Modern-Day Jonah is my personal story and details what led to my choices, it discusses the reasons I delayed returning to God and it outlines the steps I took to return to God. Now it's your turn! Take this book and materials, apply them to your life and see what God has planned for you.



NATHAN TABOR is the founder and Executive Director of Handling Life. Handling Life is a non-profit outreach ministry focused on helping others resolve real-world problems with Bible-based solutions.

Nathan is also an entrepreneur, author, business consultant, executive coach, trainer, speaker, and adjunct professor at Liberty University.

Learn more at
HandlingLife.org

All Handling Life materials are from
a Bible-Based, Christ-Centered perspective.