

*A Book Proposal*

**YOU HAVE ENOUGH FAITH**

*Stop Asking for More*

*Submitted by*

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## ***PROPOSAL OVERVIEW***

### **YOU HAVE ENOUGH FAITH *Stop Asking for More***

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#### **I. THE CONTENT**

##### **A. Premise**

After preaching and teaching faith for over twenty years, a painful realization set in. I had lots of head-knowledge faith but precious little real faith. Either God was making a fool out of me or there were some simple facts about faith I never learned as a young Christian. I set out with a new passion to “re-learn” faith. Taking a totally unique approach to Scripture, I abandoned my life-long practice of reading Scripture to validate my preconceived theological notions and began to read the Bible just to see what it said. The result was liberating and thoroughly illuminating. I immediately began to see things in familiar verses that had escaped me for years. My faith woke up. I now see the Bible as its own best commentary.

##### **B. Unique Selling Proposition**

If consumers in the target market purchase and read *You Have Enough Faith*,

*Then* they will:

- Have a heads-up understanding of what real faith entails.
- Learn how to adopt a God-centered approach to faith and believing.
- Stop focusing on self and start focusing on Christ.
- Understand focusing on ourselves instead of Christ leads to confusion.

*Because* the book will:

- Challenge readers to stop asking for more faith.
- Help believers realize they have all the faith they need.
- Provide Scriptural proof that we have enough faith and don’t need more.
- Give readers an understanding of the simplicity of faith and cause them to begin living a fruitful, enjoyable and fulfilling life for Christ.

C. Overview

The manuscript is divided into five distinct parts:

- 1. Part I: Faith can be a confusing subject.** It was for me for years. Ask ten Christians to define faith and you will hear ten different explanations. I only began to understand faith when I dared to think about Christ more and myself less. The turning point came when I realized I had been entirely man-centered in my approach to Faith. Looking through God’s eyes was liberating.
- 2. Part II: Faith is not about you and me—it is about Him.** Christ must be the beginning, the center, and the end of all we believe and practice or we will be off-center. Sad to say, much of our preaching, much of our teaching, much of our music and much of our praying is man-centered and promotes self-centered thinking. If we focus on Christ, faith becomes a natural out-growth of our relationship with Him. Faith, if you please, becomes organic to believers who learn to focus on Christ. We don’t need more faith; we need a new focus.
- 3. Part III: Faith involves waiting and waiting requires patience.** True heroes of faith throughout Scripture embody stories of patience and seeming endless waiting. Moses patiently watched someone else’s sheep for forty years. Joseph endured fourteen years in prison for a crime he didn’t commit. Christ waited thirty years before beginning His short-lived ministry. Paul, the apostle, waited three years in the desert before beginning his effort to preach Messiah Jesus to Israel. In every instance, God’s supernatural intervention resulted. God never gets in a hurry; consequently He seldom gives His power to the impatient.
- 4. Part IV: Christianity is not about what we need; it is about what we have in Christ.** If we focus on ourselves, faith is a struggle because we are reminded of what we allegedly need. I say “allegedly” because that has been Satan’s lie from the beginning, starting with the suggestion that Eve needed more knowledge about good and evil so she and Adam could be like God. They were already like God. Perhaps Satan’s biggest lie is telling us we need more faith. We don’t need more faith and I prove it from Scripture.
- 5. Part V: Real faith flourishes in stormy weather.** Storms are temporary, but they occur often and unexpectedly. I liken stormy weather to the typical problems Christians face—not because they are Christians, but because they are human. Yet, because we trust Christ, we become targets of rebellious, demonic forces and we need to remember we have an enemy. Satan hates us because we have replaced him. We now approach the very throne of God and amplify praise and worship to Him. God set him aside to make room for us.

A complete chapter-by-chapter synopsis follows, giving a more detailed overview of the manuscript.

#### D. Manuscript

1. Manuscript status: Manuscript is complete (14 chapters). Two chapters are included as sample chapters.
2. Anticipated manuscript length: 42,000 words (77 single-spaced pages in Word).

## II. THE MARKET

#### A. Characteristics

The target audience of this book is every sincere follower of Christ. Every pastor should have this book in his library to loan or give to church members struggling in their desire to trust God. Church libraries and Christian bookstores will want to make it available to Christians everywhere.

#### B. Motivations

Every believer who desires to live a full life of productive faith will find this book extremely helpful. Every frustration and fear is dealt with from my own personal experience as I struggled to understand and practice Biblical faith.

#### C. Affinity Groups

1. Listeners of James Dobson's *Focus on the Family* radio show.
2. Viewers of James Robison's *Life Today* television program.
3. Viewers of Pat Robertson's *700 Club* television program.
4. Subscribers to Christian magazines.
5. Church workers in teaching and helps ministries.
6. Everyone in any facet of Christian ministry, whether full or part-time.

#### D. Competition

Visits to Barnes and Noble, Family Christian Bookstore and Lighthouse Christian Bookstore revealed few books that dealt with the subject of faith alone. Joel Osteen's most recent book, *It's Your Time, Activate Your Faith, Achieve Your Dreams and Increase In God's Favor* (Simon & Schuster; Nov. 2009), touches on faith. To his credit he includes two chapters: *Choosing Faith Over Fear* and *Choosing Faith-filled Words*. Of the other contemporary books I researched, his alone dealt at least partially with faith but leaned toward a self-help emphasis. Another book, *Never*

*Give Up*, by New York Times bestselling author, Joyce Meyer, lists four keys to success and faith is not on the list (March, 2009, Faith Words; Hachette Group USA, Inc). Her book, *The Secret To True Happiness*, has 28 chapters, only one of which (*Move Forward In Faith*) deals with faith. The book tends to be more self-centered than Christ-centered and emphasizes the individual believer's right to happiness (April, 2008 Faith Words, Hachette Book Group USA, Inc.).

I was surprised at the ominous absence of books dealing with faith alone. The very few books that dealt specifically with faith were from classic authors of the past like Charles Finney and Smith Wigglesworth. The subject of faith in both authors' books was clearly the dominant theme with multiple references to Christ throughout. Contemporary writers' dominant themes tend to be almost totally man-centered, emphasizing what *we should do* instead of what *God has already done* and is currently doing in the lives of believers. It occurred to me that the modern mania of political correctness, emphasizing the individual and his right to happiness, has impacted Christian authors in a negative way, influencing them to focus on the individual instead of focusing on Christ. Current writing seems to make us think of ourselves instead of Christ. The tried-and-true message of the cross, and its "Not I, but Christ" emphasis, is strangely sparse in literature in the church today. I hope to help reverse that man-centered trend. I have believed for many years, if we interpret Calvary in terms of how it will benefit us, we are still bound by the spirit of this world and need deliverance. Secular psychology's theme, the importance of self-love, which the church bought into in the 1970s, is still a major influence in Christian literature to this day. I refute that "love-yourself" theme as un-scriptural.

### **III. The Author**

#### **A. Background**

I have served as evangelist, pastor, associate pastor, Christian school principal and dean, as well as a public school teacher in the secular arena. I also have several years experience as a seminar instructor and conference speaker. This book on faith is the result of nearly half a century of living for Christ. Balking at the tendency of Christian leaders to give complicated answers to simple questions, I wrote about the simplicity of the faith God gives to each believer, not as quantitative, but qualitative. Simply put, I insist each believer has been given a measure of faith that will prove to be enough. Asking for more faith is not necessary. Making Christ the center of our mindset makes faith organic and natural in the life of the believer.

I have a B.A. degree in theology (1965) from Lee University, Cleveland, Tennessee.

#### **B. Previous writing**

My own previous writing experience includes co-authoring my book, *The Fiery Furnace of Cancer*, self-published in August, 2007, under my own imprint. I have also produced six syllabuses for church seminars I have taught in the last few years.

### C. Personal Marketing

I anticipate a great deal of evangelistic ministry involving travel nationally and internationally and have have travelled extensively in the U.S., Canada, the Caribbean, and have ministered in Europe as well. We have appeared numerous times on Christian television in the past and anticipate more in the future. The book will be aggressively promoted on my website and through ministry opportunities in local churches, retreats and conferences here and abroad.

### IV. Table of contents:

#### Introduction

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## CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

### YOU HAVE ENOUGH FAITH *Stop Asking for More*

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#### **Introduction:**

Years ago I read a four-page article on faith in a major Christian magazine. After reading the extensive article, I was no closer to understanding faith than when I started. Recently I discussed the subject of faith with a fellow minister. After his rather lengthy explanation of faith, I said, “That’s confusing to me.” “Well, what’s your definition of faith?” he asked with a squint. Quoting Arndt and Gingrich’s classic definition, I said, “Trust in and reliance on God.” My friend looked at me as if I just offered him a glass of sour milk. Evidently, the definition was too simple. I contend, faith should not be a complicated subject.

My definition of faith has evolved over the years in favor of simplicity. As I studied faith, the word *obedience* kept jumping out at me. The old song, *Trust and Obey*, put it best. I have never been disappointed or hurt by trusting and obeying God and neither will you.

#### **Chapter 1: Faith Can Be a Confusing Subject**

This chapter recounts my own experience struggling with exercising faith. I felt like God was hiding something from me about faith itself. I was confused about how faith works in the lives of believers because it didn’t seem to work for me in every day life. I preached miracle-working faith and saw few, if any, verifiable miracles in my ministry or my life. Instead of believing faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains, we tend to believe it takes a mountain of faith to move a mustard seed. Faced with the simple fact, “God is not the author of confusion, but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33), I decided my confusion about the true nature of faith was not what God intended. A burning desire to “re-learn” faith resulted in this book. If God is not the author of confusion, the faith He authored should not be confusing either.

#### **Chapter 2: Faith Is Not About You and Me**

This chapter opens with a past experience that involved my decision to stop reading the Bible to validate my preconceived theological positions and start reading the Bible just to see what it said. My core theology didn’t suffer, but several of my favorite sermon titles could not survive the plain teaching of Scripture. Example: my favorite sermon on the Christian’s need to hunger and thirst after God could no longer ignore the plain declaration of Jesus, “He who comes to Me shall *never* hunger, and he who believes in Me shall *never* thirst.” Faith is not about you or me; it’s about Christ. We have been crucified; He lives in our stead. We now live with new life, His life...resurrection life.

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### Chapter 3: Job Had An I Problem

Job is a perfect example of a believer who needed transformed from self as the center to God as center. Job may have been patient, but he was also obsessed with himself. In Job, chapter 29, he refers to himself 52 times in only 25 verses. He referred to God three times. Do the math. Self out-numbers God 52 to 3 in Job's heart. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." If self dominates, faith suffers and confusion reigns. When Christ is the center of our lives, faith flourishes and simplicity reigns. Paul feared that the Corinthian believers' "minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). Self belongs on the cross so faith can flourish in Christ-centered hearts.

### Chapter 4: Faith Makes You A Target

This chapter explains the fact that, as believers, we are hated by the rebel called Satan. He hates us directly and attacks us indirectly through the world and those who do his bidding. Jesus' words are still true: "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14). Why does the world hate us? The answer is as true today as when Jesus spoke it: "And this is the condemnation [judgment], that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness rather than light*, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19, italics mine). In a word: darkness hates light. Our desire to meet the world's approval has taken the edge off our message and has resulted in a benign, ineffective Gospel. The modern cry, "What about me?" threatens to disarm the church and make us getters instead of givers. For too long we have unwittingly assumed a position of defense against Satan and his demonic forces for no good reason. I pray we won't need persecution to wake us up to the reality that we need to declare the Gospel message of Christ and Him crucified without seeking the approval of men.

### Chapter 5: The Gates of Hell Are Stationary

This chapter deals with something I missed for years—gates don't move. Jesus declared He would build His church on a rock and "the gates of hell will not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). The early church was so spiritually militant, so aggressive, onlookers declared, "These that have turned the world upside are come hither also" (Acts 17:6). They assailed the gates of Hell and made disciples everywhere they went—and they went everywhere. I deal with the obvious difference between modern believers and first-century Christians. The first believers were a moving, ground-taking, soul-winning church focused on going into the entire world as Christ commanded. Today's church is dedicated and vibrant in faith but we seem to have adopted a defensive

## CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

mindset with a view toward maintaining what we have—comfortable, safe churches in a “seeker-friendly” atmosphere. I suggest this has to do with the Augustinian worldview that infers everything that happens is somehow part of God’s plan. He rejected the first-century church’s view that saw the earth as a spiritual warzone because it seemed to nullify the sovereignty and omnipotence of God. On the contrary, the warzone worldview affirms the existence of the rebel Satan and the anti-Christian forces we contend with. God’s plan to give creatures freewill resulted in a world that has become a risky place to live. As long as freewill continues, evil will exist. God chooses to limit His involvement most of the time except in response to prayer. Make no mistake; God can and will do what He wants when He wants. Freewill makes those of us who choose to love Him, active participants in His warzone strategy.

### **Chapter 6: Jesus—Always On Time**

In this chapter I talk about the fact that God doesn’t seem to care about our schedule or time constraints. He seems bent on teaching us patience. God will do what He said He would do. He just has this unearthly schedule. Real faith is born during times of waiting and enduring. When we truly learn faith’s core lesson we come to the firm conclusion that He will answer our prayer and meet our need. He knows when and how He will answer, but He seldom tells us beforehand.

### **Chapter 7: Waiting Is A Bummer**

This chapter deals with the least favorite thing Christians want to do—patiently wait on the Lord. Personally, I hate waiting. I want God’s will in motion immediately. That is seldom, if ever, God’s plan. If we were going to bake a *faith* pie, the main ingredient would be patience. June apples are bitter, juiceless and inedible, yet they are perfect...*for June*. Come October they will be sweet and juicy. No amount of prayer will change June to October. Most of us don’t need a breakthrough; we need patience.

### **Chapter 8: Don’t Get Ahead of God**

The Bible is full of stories about heroes of faith who got ahead of God. Moses was educated and called of God to deliver Israel. He decided one day it was time to fulfill that calling. One problem: he was forty years early. Joseph told his brothers they would one day bow down to him. He was several years away from seeing that dream realized. Jealous to the bone, they sold him to a caravan driver. In the first case, God needed forty years to reform Moses’ impatience into resolution to wait on God. God also needed a certain Pharaoh in place. In Joseph’s case God, evidently, needed the fourteen years Joseph spent in prison for a crime he didn’t commit, so another pharaoh could be Egypt’s ruler at the precise time Joseph learned God was in charge of just when things transpire in the divine plan.

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### **Chapter 9: Cheer Up**

This chapter teaches the positive side of faith. This present world is immersed in negativism and impacts the church accordingly. In the story of the disciples' bout with a stormy sea in a little boat, the underlying message is clear from Jesus' words; "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." I paraphrase His words of encouragement to say, "Cheer up; I am; don't worry about a thing." Christ teaches us to understand our present circumstances are irrelevant in light of His declaration—we can live without fear simply because He said so. True Biblical faith disarms and nullifies fear.

### **Chapter 10: Lord, Is That Really You?**

This chapter focuses on the impetuous act of Peter. With the storm still raging, he said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." Without hesitation, Jesus said, "Come." So begins one of the notable New Testament miracles. Peter did walk on the water before he began to sink, albeit only a step or two. The ever-present Christ caught Peter's outstretched hand and restored him to his watery path. The lesson for every believer points to the moment in our lives when we dare to step out of the boat of conformity to attempt the miraculous. We tend to favor the security of the boat, tenaciously gripping the main mast and muttering something about "not getting in the flesh." Meanwhile, we admire those among us who seem to be used by God to work miracles and somehow believe they are different. The only difference I see is their willingness to step out and our corresponding willingness to stay safely on board with the rest of the disciples.

### **Chapter 11: Be Prepared For Mishaps**

This chapter deals with the realities of living on this risky planet called Earth. Peter definitely walked on the water a few steps before he began to sink. Yes, Christ immediately saved Peter when he cried, "Lord, save me." But several earthly realities influenced the scene. We forget the facts that Peter got wet, experienced real fear and was probably chilled to the bone. As I mention several times, planet Earth is a spiritual war zone. Stuff happens that is not always pleasant and is seldom fair. The beauty comes in relying on Christ in the face of trouble and trial. Anyone can trust Him when the money's good, nobody is sick and everything is peachy. Real faith is required when the storms of life come and, rest assured, they will come. Faith always remembers Christ, our Captain, standing above it all. He is only limited by our failure to trust Him implicitly.

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### **Chapter 12: Storms Are Temporary**

This chapter begins when Matthew 14:32 tells us, “the wind ceased.” The underlying analogy is obvious. No storm lasts forever, though some seem to show no signs of letting up. I can’t tell you how many Christian friends have asked the same question I have asked over and over again. It takes several forms, but usually sounds like this: “How long will this last?” or “When will this be over?” It always revolves around enduring patience. As usual, God eventually comes to the rescue and we say with resolve, “I’ll never doubt Him again.” This resolve lasts only until the next calamity brings us to desperation all over again. Patience in this inevitable cycle leads us to finally stop resolving and start trusting no matter what befalls us.

### **Chapter 13: It’s All About Who You Know**

When Jesus and Peter returned to that small ship hand in hand, the disciples made a declaration that is the litmus test of believers everywhere from that day to this. “Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God” (Matt. 14:32). It took a storm that almost ended their lives to bring the disciples to realize that He is truly the Son of God. This chapter reminds us of the unlikely fact that, occasionally, the world can be our example. In the world order, who you know can make or break you in business, politics and relationships. Similarly, who you know in the Kingdom of God can make or break you spiritually. The list of potential movers and shakers is quite short however. Only one name comes to mind: Jesus of Nazareth. Knowing about Him is never enough. Knowing Him personally is the key. Believing we can know Him personally and intimately is our salvation and will ultimately lead to faith without doubting.

### **Chapter 14: For Him**

This chapter seeks to capulate this discussion on faith by reminding the reader of the underlying theme: it’s not about you and me—it’s about Him. I refer to one of my favorite verses: “He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but *for Him* who died and rose again on their behalf” (II Cor. 5:15, NASB, italics mine). I suggest man-centered thinking is suffocating believers today by inducing them to focus on themselves instead of the Christ of glory. Only as we focus on Christ more than ourselves can the Holy Spirit convince us we have enough faith. True to Scripture, when we begin to seek to please Christ and Christ only, our faith becomes organic and natural. John the Baptist understood this principle. He said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

## ***SAMPLE CHAPTERS***

### Chapter 1

#### **FAITH CAN BE A CONFUSING SUBJECT**

*But the ship was...tossed with waves* Matt. 14:24

I have struggled with faith since accepting Christ as a seventeen-year-old. I remember a young Christian friend saying, “Faith means, you just pretend it’s going to happen and it happens.” Hard as I tried, that never seemed to work for me. At the same time, that pretend exercise seems to emphasize simple expectation. After all “Faith is the substance [reality] of things *hoped* for, the evidence [proof] of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1, italics mine). The words *reality* and *proof* are the suggested literal translations of the words *substance* and *evidence*, according to Alfred Marshall in his excellent interlinear New Testament. Simply put, faith is expecting what you hope for.

Hebrews 11:1 is the standard answer to the question, “What is faith?” Ask ten Christians to discuss what Hebrews 11:1 means, however, and you will hear ten different explanations. Believers in other countries, especially in poorer areas of the world, seem to have more faith than we do in America. Extraordinary miracles occur on a regular basis. Someone recently suggested something that got my attention. He said, “Christians in other countries don’t have any more faith than we do. They just don’t have any doubt.” Evidently, when it comes to faith, they just expect things to happen and they happen.

#### **THE BOY WHO HAS NO EYES**

I’m being drawn by the Holy Spirit to recount a story told by my good friend Arthur Leis. Arthur was a missionary in Kenya and Uganda for thirty-five years. He sat on my couch in South Carolina and shared a miracle he witnessed in Uganda. As he preached through a translator in a local church one evening, he quoted the verse, “With God, nothing

shall be impossible” (Luke 1:37). An immediate reaction came from the audience and the men began to talk with each other. Noticing the positive response, Arthur kept referring to that verse and, as he did, the congregation became more and more talkative. Finally, the men stood and began to walk out. Confused, Arthur asked what was happening. The pastor explained, “Since you told them, ‘with God, nothing is impossible,’ they have decided this must be the night God will heal the boy who has no eyes.”

Assuming the boy was blind, Arthur quickly admitted he had no faith for something like that and said he wasn’t going. The pastor cautioned him saying, “If we don’t go, they will be insulted,” so, reluctantly, Arthur went along with the pastor and his people. They made their way to a hut in the village and went inside. What Arthur saw shocked him. The boy wasn’t just blind—he had no eyeballs. His eyelids were shut and sunken, revealing empty sockets. The pastor began a simple prayer. As he prayed, a light brightened the dimly lit room as if it were noon. Arthur watched in amazement as the boy’s sunken eyelids slowly began to bulge out. Moments later the eyelids cracked open to reveal what looked like hard-boiled eggs. The pastor, standing by the boy, said, “Lord, he has no brown spots in his eyes. If you don’t give him the brown spots, he won’t be able to see.” Arthur watched as a tiny spot appeared on each eyeball. The spots slowly morphed into brown irises and the boy began to see for the first time in his life. That child is now a young man preaching in the many churches God started through a humble missionary named Arthur Leis. If you ask him about his part in the event, Arthur will insist he was only a witness and admonish you to give God all the credit. Those precious people had no doubt.

We spend a lot of time trying to understand why miracles are few and far between in the modern church. We tend to blame ourselves and say we don’t have enough faith. I found only one place in the New Testament where anyone ever asked for more faith. “And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). Marshall’s literal translation

reads, “Add to us faith” instead of, “Increase our faith.” The idea of *more* faith isn’t really the focus. They simply asked that faith be given to them. In response Jesus said, “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea: and it should obey you” (Luke 17:6). Simply put, Jesus is saying, even minute faith can produce miraculous results. It’s not size, but the mere existence of faith that spurs God to move supernaturally. Matthew records another mustard seed illustration when the disciples failed to cast a demon from a child. “Why could not we cast him out?” they asked. “And Jesus said unto them, *Because of your unbelief*: 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 to you” (Matt. 17:19-20, italics mine). The word, *unbelief*, can be literally translated as *little faith*, but the root meaning is “faithlessness or uncertainty, distrust [or] unbelief,” according to Spiros Zodhiates in his Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible. The Greek word is *apistia* (phonetically spelled) and is typically used to denote unbelievers or unbelief in general. The reality is, they lacked expectancy.

#### FAITH IS TRUSTING, NOT TRYING

Matthew concluded this story with the words, “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matt. 17:21), suggesting only those who fast and pray can cast out demons. Verse twenty-one is not found in the oldest manuscripts, which means it was added later. I’m not taking away from the Word of God—I’m staying close to the original. If much prayer and fasting is required to cast out certain demons, then many believers will never see it happen. It suggests something beyond faith is required. Scripture teaches otherwise. Consider Matthew 10:1. “And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against [over] unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.” Luke, chapter 10, tells us Jesus expanded His efforts and

sent out seventy disciples shortly thereafter with the same instructions, telling them to go in pairs before Him. Those disciples did not fast or pray; they just went. Verse seventeen tells us, “And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” The disciples were surprised that they cast out devils with such ease. Jesus, responded to their joy by saying, “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). Why do we tend to make casting out demons contingent on fasting and praying instead a simple matter of acting on the simple instruction of Christ?

I know James said, “Even so faith, if it hath not works is dead, being alone” (2:20). He is simply saying faith will naturally lead to works. In other words, action is the normal and organic result of faith, but works will never produce faith. As usual, we have reversed the order. Faith is trusting, not trying. When you fully trust God you will act accordingly. To paraphrase James 2:15-16, If a brother or sister needs clothing and food, you don’t just tell them it will be all right—you give them clothes and food. Faith without works is just words. The immature, undisciplined disciples just went and did what Jesus told them to do. They didn’t spend days fasting, praying and “preparing their hearts.” They just went and did. They didn’t think about it; they acted. Before you misjudge me, I believe in fasting and prayer. I just don’t believe it is a prerequisite to casting out devils or healing the sick. Why would Christ require of us what He never required of the disciples. Consider further, this was before any disciples experienced the infilling of the Spirit at Pentecost. They fasted and prayed then, but out of devotion, not because they needed extra power to cast out demons or work miracles.

The disciples of John addressed the question of Christ’s disciples and fasting when they asked, “Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with

them? but the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast” (Matt. 9:14-15). We fast today, not out of need to procure power, but out of respect for Him who said, “Follow Me.” Fasting brings focus. Unger’s Bible Dictionary expresses the meaning of fasting in its simplicity saying, “After the Jewish custom fasting was frequently joined with prayer that the mind, unencumbered with earthly matter, might devote itself with less distraction to the contemplation of divine things.” I fast, not to gain power with God, but to re-focus my mind on His purpose and will on earth.

While writing this chapter, I called my dear friend and former college professor, Dr. Duran Palmertree, to ask him a few questions about faith. As usual, he was a fountain of useful information. He suggested most of us believe it takes a mountain of faith to move a mustard seed. I laughed and agreed. We do tend to reverse the divine order of things. As a teenager, I interpreted Galatians 5:16 in reverse. It says, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.” I immediately set about working on not fulfilling the lust of the flesh, so I could walk in the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit, by the way, is not floating around, two feet off the ground, healing everyone your shadow touches. Paul loved to say the same thing two different ways to make a point. He talks about walking in the Spirit two verses earlier. “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, [to put it another way] Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5:14-16). How do we walk in the Spirit? By loving our neighbor as ourselves. It doesn’t sound too deep, but that’s what it says and means. In other words, learning to love Scripturally is the first step to spiritual growth. Learning to love God’s way is not the goal; it is the foundation of all the rest. It’s not the end; it’s the means. King Saul prophesied one day and tried to kill David the next. Evidently it is possible to be spiritual without love. Paul adds this footnote: “If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but

do not have love, I am become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1, 2, NASB). Without love as a foundation, you have no basis for growth.

Mark 11:22-24 talks about what is commonly referred to as “mustard seed” faith. “And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; *and shall not doubt in his heart* (italics mine), but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive[d] them and ye shall have them.” Marshall translates the word receive as *received*. There you have it. Have faith in [trust in and rely on] God and, without doubting, count it as a done deal. Believers in other countries experience the miraculous more than we do here in America. Could it be, as mentioned earlier, they don’t have more faith—they just don’t doubt? Could it be, they just do instead of preparing to do?

#### GOD IS A FATHER WHO JUST HAPPENS TO BE GOD

As an earthly father with limited resources, I will do anything humanly possible to respond to my children’s needs. Our heavenly Father, will do anything in His unlimited power to meet His children’s needs. God is called Father six times in the Old Testament. The New Testament calls Him Father, some three hundred times. As my friend, Pastor Bob Simmons says, “God is a Father *who just happens to be God*.” It seems His favorite role is that of Father. God loves His family and will meet the need of every child who calls Him, Father. “And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). According to Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Abba “was in common use in the mixed Aramaic dialect of Palestine, and was used by children in

addressing their father. It answers to our word *papa*.” A good earthly father is easy to trust. Our Eternal Father is utterly trustworthy. I have prodded Bobby to write the book, *God Is a Father Who Just Happens to Be God*. It’s his thought. He has respectfully declined, so I asked him if I could write it on his behalf. He said, “Go for it.” It is on my list of future books to write.

### SATAN’S BIGGEST LIE

Paul, in Romans, talks about “the measure of faith.” He admonishes us to, “think soberly, according as God has dealt [divided] to every man [to each] the [a] measure of faith” (Rom. 12:3). Allow me to paraphrase. “God has given you a measure of faith and that will prove to be enough. You won’t need more.” Satan’s biggest lie has always been, “You need more; you don’t have enough.” His temptation to Eve suggested she needed more knowledge. “For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as [like] gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). Did you catch Satan’s second subtle lie? Adam and Eve were already like God. “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). Satan wants you to focus on your alleged needs. God wants you to focus on His Son and His full provision. The Father’s first recorded words in the New Testament could be the underlying theme of the New Covenant. It reads, “This is my beloved son: hear him” (Luke 9:35). True faith centers on Christ and looks nowhere else.

As a young Christian, I constantly felt I needed more of God. At least, that was what preachers and teachers seemed to suggest. Over time, I began to realize I didn’t need more of God—I had all of God in Christ. “For in Him [Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in [having been filled full with] Him.” (Col. 2:9-10). Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian Christians ended with the words, “know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19).

Colossians 1:19 further asserts, “For it pleased the Father that in Him [Christ] should all fullness dwell.” 2000 years ago God gave us everything He had in Christ, and went out of the giving business. I’m fully aware He still gives us our daily bread and supplies all our needs. Those are on-going material necessities. In the Spirit realm, Christ has already provided every spiritual need according to His word. “According as His divine power hath given unto us *all* things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Pet. 1:3, italics mine). He didn’t give us some things or certain things—He gave us *all* things. Stop asking for what you already have. It’s an insult to Christ’s sacrifice and Calvary’s full provision. The evangelist in me makes me want to shout, “Somebody say amen!”

#### WE LACK NOTHING IF WE HAVE CHRIST

God no longer gives us things—He gives us Christ. Need peace? “For He is our peace” (Eph. 2:14). Need power? “Christ [is] the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:24). Need wisdom, righteousness, sanctification or redemption? “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Want love? “God is love” (1 John 4:8). One of my favorite verses is very liberating. “In whom [Christ] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Lest we get full of ourselves, the Holy Spirit reminds us through Paul, “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us” (2 Cor. 4:7). We lack nothing if we have Christ. All wisdom and knowledge is found in Him and, consequently, is freely available to us. He is the treasure. He is our access to all wisdom and knowledge.

Where does the Holy Spirit fit in all this? Christ tells us. “Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.” What

does the Holy Spirit hear? Conversations between the Father and the Son. Christ continues: “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:13-15). Focus your faith on the living Christ. Remember the promises of God and be aware of what the Word of God teaches, but always focus on Christ. If you must look within, look at Christ ten times before you look at yourself even once. Looking within, incidentally, only produces one of two undesirable things. You are either conscious of failure, which brings depression, or you are doing well, which leads to pride. Paul reminds us, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me” (Gal. 2:20, NASB). It’s not about you—it’s about Him. Stop looking at yourself and start looking at Him. It’s not about you; get over it. You have been crucified with Christ and you no longer live. Yet, because He lives, you live. Because He does, you can do. Just remember: “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (I Cor. 10:31, NASB). It really is about Him.

#### SHE KNOCKS OVER FURNITURE TO GET INTO THE SPOTLIGHT

True faith rejoices in the provision of Christ and takes credit for nothing. Christ said, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). The pure in heart are free of selfish ambition and shun the spotlight. Mature believers are careful not to touch God’s glory. I used to be late for everything when I was young. One day I heard my seventh-grade teacher say, “Chronic lateness is a sign of immaturity.” I decided I would never be late again. “I might be immature,” I thought to myself, “but I won’t advertise it anymore.” One evening I went to church early, as usual, and watched others arrive for the mid-week service. A few minutes into the service, in came a lady I knew. She made her way toward the front and found a seat midway in the second row, apologizing as she stepped over several people. I

thought to myself, “That really aggravates me. There are lots of seats in the back. She’s just trying to get attention.” The Lord spoke and said, “Yes, she knocks over furniture to get into the spotlight. You come early and try to sit where you think the spotlight will be shining.” I never criticized her again.

#### THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED THAT RUINED EVERYTHING

As a young evangelist, I had the most beautiful message on hungering and thirsting for God. I based it on David’s prayer, “As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the Living God: when shall I come and appear before God?” (Ps.42:1-2). We preachers love our concordances. Typically a preacher will pray until he gets a thought. He assumes it must be from God, but to be safe he says, “I wonder if there is any Scripture to back up my thought.” Out comes the concordance. For years I preached my message on the Christian’s need to be hungry and thirsty for God. Then something happened that ruined everything. I realized one day I should stop reading the Bible to verify what I already believed and dare to read just to see what it said. It didn’t affect any of my basic doctrinal positions, but it did wreak havoc on some of my favorite sermons, including my message on being hungry and thirsty for God. For years everything was fine as long as I skipped over verses that didn’t support my sermonic theory. Reality set in quickly when I stopped ignoring bothersome verses that went against the point I wanted to make. The Bible is its own best commentary. Jesus has the last word on our alleged need to be hungry and thirsty for God. “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall *never* hunger; and he that believeth on me shall *never* thirst” (John 6:35, italics mine). Hunger for Him when in need of forgiveness, but rest in His provision from then on and enjoy fullness.

To add insult to my already injured pride, Jesus told the Samaritan woman as she offered Him a drink of water, “Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But

whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall *never* thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13-14, italics mine). I’m reminded of the old admonition to “get under the spout where the glory comes out.” It seemed plausible at the time. I spent lots of time as a young Christian trying to get under that spout. Realizing I have a well inside set me free.

#### THERE MAY BE SOME LEAKAGE

Evidently, we can be filled with glory on Sunday, but by Wednesday there may be some leakage, so we need to attend the mid-week service to tank up. Certainly, between Wednesday and Sunday, more leakage can occur, so Sunday attendance is strongly advised. I can hear them now. “Everybody grab your buckets; it’s time for church.” I can hear the pails clanging against the doors as we get in and out of the car. To be clear, I fully recognize the need for spiritual renewal. We believers need those renewing experiences “when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). I am also aware we can be re-filled with the Spirit from time to time. In Acts 2:4 the remnant of Christ’s followers were filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Two chapters later we read, “And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). As the old Pentecostal preachers put it, “One filling—many re-fillings.”

#### THROW YOUR BUCKET AWAY

That said, when you realize the truth about Jesus and the water He provides, you become your own water supply. You become the well. The water of life comes from Christ who dwells within and it’s free. “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. 22:17). Throw your bucket away. You can stop living with hunger and thirst and start feeding others and quenching their thirst. Throw your bucket away and

become a giver instead of a taker. Throw your bucket away and become a funnel of refreshing that comes from the presence of the Lord. Exercising your faith from a perspective of fullness is much easier than struggling to believe in a parched desert. It's the difference between night and day, black and white, cold and hot and, ultimately, doubt and mountain-moving faith. Faith needs a positive foundation and a proper mindset to work effectively. You don't need more faith—you need a fresh perspective. Focus on Him, rest in Him and be aware of His full provision. You have a lot to give away. After telling His disciples to “heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils,” Jesus added, “Freely have you received; freely give” (Matt. 10:8). Stop asking for more faith and get busy giving.

#### STOP LIVING IN ADAM'S POVERTY

There is a major difference between trusting God to supply all your needs and recognizing your God-given right to walk in the fullness of Christ with all your needs fully met. When can you start walking in fullness? Right now! Stop living in Adam's poverty and start walking in Christ's fullness. Stop thinking about your lack and start thanking God for His guaranteed fullness. Christianity is not about what we need. Christianity is about what we already have in and through Christ. “And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). He died and rose again so we could enjoy God in all His glory right here on Earth. Because of Calvary we are children of God with all the rights of sonship. “But as many as received him, to them gave he power [right and authority] to become sons [children] of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). You can start enjoying God's fullness right now and be continually satisfied. As Jesus Himself explains, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Mt. 5:6), or as Marshall translates, “for they shall be satisfied.” I know it sounds too easy, but dare to

believe it. It may take some mental effort to enlarge your thinking, especially if you have spent years focusing on yourself and your own needs. Focus on Christ and His fullness. “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27). If you must look inside yourself, see only the Christ of glory.

#### FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY YEARS, I’M ABOUT TO BE HAPPY

Years ago, I preached a revival in a small local church. After a week of services, a man stood and said, “I didn’t know what to think about some of the things this young preacher was saying, but for the first time in twenty years, I’m about to be happy.”

Evidently, he started thinking more about Christ than himself.

Many believers walk where you walk. I did for years. It’s an easy habit to form—just follow the crowd. The truths we cling to depend on our point of view. Applied to church life, that means you will adopt the mindset of the church family you embraced as a new Christian. We all tend to see through denominational glasses. We usually accept what we are taught by spiritual leaders we trust and tend to believe it without question. Yet no one has a monopoly on the truth. At the same time, we all have access to God’s word.

When the Bereans heard Paul and Silas preach, they “received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). They didn’t just accept what they heard—they verified it in Scripture. Perhaps we should develop the same habit. Wouldn’t it be interesting if you interrupted a preacher and said, “Excuse me, do you have any Scripture to back up what you just said?” I preached a meeting in Florida years ago and invited listeners to do just that. The meeting lasted a month, with concluding services on Easter Sunday. In the middle of the Easter morning message, a hand went up on the back row. “Brother Ted, I’ve got a question.” I responded, “Yes, Joe,

what is it?” Visitors looked around in disbelief. I answered his question and continued as if nothing happened. I welcomed the interruption.

How many times have you heard a preacher say something that puzzled you? Wouldn't it be nice to get an explanation right then? I don't know if the church is ready for that. Meanwhile, if you can find a way to remove your doctrinal glasses and read the Bible for what it says, you will find a freshness that is truly liberating. And your core theology won't be affected at all. Start adjusting your faith-focus from yourself to Him and your confusion will begin to evaporate. “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33).

## Chapter 3

### **JOB HAD AN I PROBLEM**

*Not I, but Christ Gal. 2:20*

The patience of Job has been a favorite sermon topic for centuries. I accepted the traditional view that portrayed Job as a very patient man. He certainly exhibited amazing patience according to the early chapters of the Book of Job. Chapter one tells the painful story of the rustling of Job's oxen and asses by the Sabeans, the loss of his flocks of sheep and his servants, the theft of his camels by the Chaldeans and the agonizing, fatal loss of his sons and daughters. In response to losing virtually everything, "Job arose and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshipped. Then he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.' Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God" (Job 1:20-22, NASB).

God's estimate of Job before his devastating experience was notable. "Again there was a day when the sons of God came one day to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Then Satan answered the Lord and said, 'From roaming about on the earth, and walking around on it.' And the Lord said to Satan, 'Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause'" (Job 2:1-3, NASB). Several things could be discussed here, but I will limit myself to Job's integrity and determination to trust God. It is generally seen as extraordinary patience.

Over the years I began to suspect Job's patience wasn't as enduring as I once imagined. Advocates of positive thinking would recoil at some of Job's self-centered, negative statements. The chinks in Job's armor started to become visible when God allowed Satan to attack Job physically but drew the line when He said, "Behold, he is in thine hand; but save [spare] his life" (Job 2:6). Satan's plan was severe. "So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). Job's weakness became evident soon enough. He held his ground when his wife saw his plight and encouraged him to "curse God, and die" (v. 9). "But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity? In all this Job did not sin with his lips" (Job 2:10, NASB). So far, so good. His patience still sustained him.

Job had three friends who, when they heard of his affliction, came to mourn with him and comfort him. As they approached, the Bible says, "And when they lifted up their eyes at a distance, and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe, and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that his pain was very great" (Job 2:12, 13, NASB). The boils had so ravaged Job's body, even his close friends weren't sure it was him. Soon, however, realizing it was their friend and unprepared for his physical appearance, they showed their grief in true oriental fashion. They tore their clothes, perhaps the deepest expressions of grief, and threw dust on their heads which is an ancient reminder that man was made from the dust of the earth.

#### I WOULD HAVE THROWN IN THE TOWEL

Satan waited patiently. He seemed to know Job's patience was more fleshly than Godly. Some people are blessed with a patient spirit. I am not one of them. Job's nature seemed to give him more than average patience, but all of us have a limit on our endurance

for pain. Sure enough, Job broke after seven days. I would have thrown in the towel half way through the first day. I'm being generous. With my low tolerance for pain, I may not have lasted the first hour. My wife spent over three years with a constant headache from a car accident, along with limited neck motion and endless nights of sleep deprivation. X-rays showed two discs literally crushed. Our chiropractor was amazed she could move her neck at all. I don't know how she stood it. Why God waited so long is beyond us, but He instantly healed her one Sunday night as we fellowshiped with a minister friend and his wife. My friend prayed for her at the end of his message and three years and six months of agony and frustration ended in a moment. She immediately had full range of motion in her neck and that night, she slept like a baby eight hours or more, something she hadn't done since the accident. Three hours of sleep seemed to be her limit. I got up from the computer as I wrote this chapter and asked my wife if there was one lesson she learned during those three-and-a-half painful years. She immediately said, "Patience." Shortly, an x-ray showed her formerly s-shaped neck to be in perfect alignment.

#### WHY DID I NOT DIE AT BIRTH?

As I said, Job broke. "Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth. And Job said, Let the day perish on which I was to be born" (Job 3:1-3, NASB). He goes on for several verses in the same negative vein. Verse eleven epitomized his frustration when he cried, "Why did I not die at birth, Come forth from the womb and expire?" (NASB) His grief and pain were too much to endure any longer. God was going for the ultimate lesson, "Trust Me, no matter what." But God had some digging and rooting out to do first. Job's "I" problem quickly surfaces in his negative attitude. His words justify, and at the same time, betray him "Then Job replied, Even today my complaint is rebellion. His hand is heavy despite my groaning. Oh that I knew where I might find Him, That I might come to His seat! I would present my case before Him And fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn the

words which He would answer, And perceive what He would say to me. Would He contend with me by the greatness of His power? No, surely He would pay attention to me. There the upright would reason with Him; And I would be delivered forever from my Judge” (Job 23:1-7, NASB). Job believed God was meting out judgment with a heavy hand. The Lord had something more in mind.

#### WITH ALL HOPE GONE, JOB STILL WOULDN'T LET GO OF GOD

Job continued his complaint and then seemed to come to his senses. His patience ran out but he refused to give in or give up. “Behold, I go forward but He is not there, And backward, but I cannot perceive Him; When He acts on the left, I cannot behold Him; He turns on the right, I cannot see Him. *But He knows the way that I take; When He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold*” (Job 23:8-10, NASB, italics mine). For all practical purposes, Job was learning to trust his God, no matter what and that is the true meaning of faith. After losing everything— his flocks, his children and now, his health—he trusted his life to God. I know pure persistence alone is not faith, but when it’s all said and done, Job was one determined man. Can you and I dare be that dedicated? I’d like to think so. With all hope gone, Job still wouldn’t let go of God. In the end patience needs to give way to persistence to the point we can’t tell one from the other.

As the chapter title suggests, Job had an “I” problem. In my mind, the lesson in the Book of Job is not patience. It’s all about who’s in charge. If we want to run our own lives, God will politely step back and let us do the driving. Somebody said, “You serve God in your way, and I’ll serve God in my way.” The problem is, if you serve God in your way and I serve God in my way, pretty soon there’s nobody left to serve God in *His* way. And He has a way that takes all the pressure off if we have the courage to walk in it. Solomon gave us insight when he said, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). God’s way is straight and narrow. Jesus clarified that

for us in Matthew 7:13-14. “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Could it be few people find the straight and narrow way because they aren’t really looking for it? How could that be? Simply put, if selfishness is ruling you, the broad way is more attractive. You can walk there and still call the shots, brimming with fleshly self-confidence. The narrow way requires giving up your right to self-rule. After a lifetime of living for yourself, that can be scary.

### WHAT ABOUT ME?

Job’s real problem is revealed in chapter twenty-nine. In twenty-five short verses, Job refers to himself no less than fifty-two times. That’s at least twice a verse. Job was still basically looking out for number one. He was still calling the shots. Everything was still about him. His life revolved around the common cliché, “What about me?” He was still the one on the throne in his heart. We don’t know how much time passed during Job’s trial, but the outcome was ordained of God. His purpose in dealing with Job as severely as He did is revealed in the last chapter of Job’s book when he said, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:5-6). A whole book could be written just dealing with the subject of self and its relentless fight for authority and recognition. I hope you can take comfort in Job’s experience. We tend to blame God for our hard times, or worse yet, blame ourselves for poor choices or just plain wrong decisions that bring dire consequences. Be sure of one thing—God will use whatever He chooses to teach us to trust Him and He isn’t picky. He used David’s adultery to bring Solomon into the world and, thereby continue the lineage of Christ. He used jealous, conniving brothers to put Joseph’s life in peril, but God turned it to save many lives during a terrible drought and famine in Egypt. God used Moses’ poor judgment

to gain the forty years needed to transform Moses into a vessel He could use to deliver the entire nation of Israel. He used Peter's public denial of Christ to transform a fisherman into an apostle. He will use our failures and even sin, if need be, to build His character into us. If you are wondering why the promises of God are taking so long, wonder no more. God needs seasoned servants who have learned to trust Him, no matter what.

God restored everything to Job after his heart was renovated. Because Job's focus shifted away from self to God, he was restored. "And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). I don't believe God turned Job's captivity because he prayed for his friends. I choose to believe Job's change of heart freed him to pray for his friends. He could do that because he stopped thinking about himself and that took a lengthy, divine adjustment. The result was glorious.

#### TO DENY YOURSELF YOU MUST LEARN TO FORGET YOURSELF

Paul reminded us of this necessary process when he said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20, NASB). Jesus reminds us, "Whoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mark 8:34). To deny yourself, you must learn to forget yourself and your own interests, daring to believe God's interests are more important than yours. There are ways that seem right, and then there are God's ways. May the Holy Spirit enable us to choose wisely. We often make wrong choices. Don't quit because of inevitable mistakes. Get back up and continue to follow that man from Galilee. Jesus could have tiptoed away from the Garden of Gethsemane in the middle of the night and never been heard from again, and we would never have been the wiser. He chose to do the Father's will. He kept to the course the Father laid out for Him. He knew the cross awaited yet found the

courage to walk that most narrow of ways with joy. He looked beyond the short term agony and embraced the victory that lay ahead. He did it for you and me. We are admonished to look “unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Christ’s journey to victory and joy intersected with Golgotha’s cross. Our journey follows the same path. There is no other way. Embrace the cross and follow the crucified One. Resurrection life awaits. I’m not talking about life in heaven some day. I’m talking about abundant, victorious living right here and right now. Stop waiting for victory; start walking in it today! Say with Paul, “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:57). According to Bullinger, *victory* here means conquest, especially victory in battle. Simply put, this spiritual warfare Paul emphasized, is a conflict we are guaranteed to win. Thanks be to God!