

UNDERSTANDING *your* SOUL

*"Praise the Lord, O my soul
and forget none of His benefits."
Psalm 103:2*

RICK HUGHES



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EVANGELISTIC MINISTRIES

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THE REAL YOU

No doubt, you have looked in a mirror recently. Was the person staring back at you “the real you?” If your face is smashed in an accident, would the real you change? If you lost a leg or hand, would you become an inferior real you? Of course not!

The real you is not visible

Then is the real you in your heart? We know that can’t be true because people have heart transplants and remain alive, retaining the same personality as before. Others have mechanical hearts implanted. They too live and remain themselves. Every day people are resuscitated after their heart stops beating. A medic places paddles on a person’s chest, and zap, the person comes “back to life.”

Life is in the soul

Life never left that person because life is in the soul. Your soul is the real you. It is not your body. Your soul is the residence of your life. The mentality of your soul is the source of your thoughts. You are what you think. *“For as he thinks within himself, so he is”* (Prov 23:7). Until an EEG or other procedure declares your brain is dead, you are physically alive.

Your soul is the real you

If you have ever seen a dead body in a funeral home you remember recognizing the person. They had the same freckled nose or scar but seemed strangely changed. Why? Because at death the person’s soul exited the body.

In death, that body became an empty shell. Outwardly, the same; but without a soul to impart life and personality, it was different. The person didn't seem the same because the real person, resident in the soul, was no longer in the body.

Death is the separation of the soul from the body

In whose hand is the life of every living thing,
and the breath of all mankind?
(Job 12:10)

God imputes soul life at birth

Life begins when God breathes life into a body. In Genesis 2:7, *"The Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and [only then] man became a living being."*

The breath of life is what we know to be the soul. There is no human being until God puts a soul into the body.

Think of when a baby is born. That tiny body is motionless, then it inhales a breath. It is the breath of God. In the very next moment, the baby exhales a lusty cry that convinces everyone he or she is indeed alive.

God has given the small frail body a soul, and in that soul resides human life.

Possession of a soul distinguishes man from all other living creatures

What exactly is the soul? Let me define it for you as the immaterial, immortal essence of a human being that comprises the real person, giving the person rational, moral and relational capabilities.

The soul never dies

The soul is the intangible and immortal part of a human imputed by God. Man creates biological life, but only God creates a soul and gives human life. Everyone has a soul designed by God. That soul never dies. Our bodies age and die, but **our souls live forever.**

He who believes in the Son has eternal life;
he who does not believe in the Son will not
see life but the wrath of God abides on him.
(John 3:36)

God never lies. He declares that your soul, once freed from your body through death, instantly reaches one of two destinations. It either goes to heaven or to hell.

I can't emphasize this enough - the soul of everyone, without exception, will spend eternity either in heaven or in the Lake of Fire, the eventual destination of Satan, the fallen angels and all unbelievers. ***"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved"*** (Acts 16:31) otherwise you will have unrelenting fiery pain and misery with no hope of escape. Those are the only options.

Look in the mirror again. The eyes staring back at you will some day be empty because your soul will have left your body. This body that we inhabit is destined to return to dust. Scripture says in Ecclesiastes 12:7, *"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it."*

Every soul will spend eternity in either heaven or in the Lake of Fire

We know the destination of your body. It will eventually decompose into the dust from which it came. But where will your soul be?

If you want the guaranteed transition of your soul to heaven, there is only one way - believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior, faith alone in Christ alone.

God so loved the world, that He gave His uniquely born Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
(John 3:16)

When you believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, God gives you a one-way, irrevocable ticket to heaven.

Salvation by faith is too simple, you think. Not so, God says. That is because grace is God's policy. Jesus Christ did all the work. *"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

Salvation is God's grace gift to all mankind

We are no longer condemned if we accept His gift. This is explained in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Jesus Christ set aside the independent use of His deity to become man. He went to the cross as our substitute and willingly endured God the Father's judgment for all the sins of mankind. He took our place so that we would be given His righteousness at the moment of salvation. He did all this so our souls could live with Him forever in heaven.

Suppose you decide you will take charge of your soul's destiny. You want to do it your way. You think being good enough will get you there, even though the Bible clearly tells you, *"There is none righteous, not even one"* (Romans 3:10). You don't believe God when He says that without His Son you can't have eternal life.

Wake up! You need to believe in the only way to heaven, ***“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me”*** (John 14:6). Otherwise your soul, in an indestructible body, will burn in the Lake of Fire forever.

That is what will occur if you do not accept Christ as your Savior. God has infinite power to back His Word.

He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the uniquely born Son of God.
(John 3:18)

Just as with any trip, once your soul reaches its final destination, you cannot change where you arrived. You can't say, "But I didn't really mean to end up here. I don't like fire. Give me another chance."

The decision you make, for or against Jesus Christ, determines the eternal destination of your soul.

What think you of Christ? (Matt 22:42)

If you haven't made this most important decision in your life, do it now because tomorrow isn't a certainty. Don't risk your future. Will the real you spend eternity with your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ or in an everlasting, terror-filled fire? **Your soul - Your choice.**

Your Christian life starts with your decision for Christ and then it's about making good decisions every day based on what Scripture says. God speaks to you through His Word, the Bible. As you learn, retain and apply God's Word, your soul acquires the mind of Christ.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:5)

You make good decisions when you base them on the thinking of Jesus Christ which we call divine viewpoint.

‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.’ (Is 55:8-9)

Divine viewpoint is the thinking and standards of God as recorded in the Bible. Human viewpoint is the opposite. Here’s an example. Human viewpoint is thinking people or circumstances will make you happy. Divine viewpoint is *“Happiness belongs to those who hear the Word of God and keep it”* (Luke 11:28). Human viewpoint is what the world tells you to think and do. Divine viewpoint is learning to think from a new source, what the Bible says.

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

God tells you in this Scripture to transform your soul by renewing your thinking. This means to renovate, to change how you think from human viewpoint to divine viewpoint. You do this by establishing a routine of daily accurate Bible study. Learning to think like Jesus Christ is how you develop your soul and come to know and fulfill God’s plan for your life.

**God sees the real you
He knows what you’re thinking**

BODY, SOUL AND SPIRIT

Adam and Eve were the first members of the human race. God formed Adam from the dust of the earth and Eve from Adam's rib. He created them with bodies, souls and human spirits. They needed their human spirits to have a relationship with Jesus Christ in the Garden of Eden and to learn spiritual matters including His will for their lives.

When they sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, they still had souls but they no longer had alive human spirits. They were spiritually dead.

But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die [immediate spiritual death and eventual physical death].
(Genesis 2:17)

Spiritually dead through this original sin, Adam and Eve lost their way to heaven. Had they physically died then, their souls would have gone to hell. Instead, their souls are in heaven. God gives everyone the opportunity to believe in Jesus Christ as Savior.

Adam and Eve accepted God's saving grace.

I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked [unbeliever] but rather that the wicked turn from his way [rejecting Jesus Christ] and live [by accepting Jesus Christ]. (Ezekiel 33:11)

God's saving grace is available to all

When Adam and Eve took God's grace gift of salvation by believing in the promised Savior to come, God made them spiritually alive again with human spirits. They could now resume their spiritual lives. When Adam and Eve died, their souls and human spirits went to heaven, as will yours if you are a Christian.

The Sin Nature

If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves. (1 John 1:8)

When Adam and Eve sinned, they acquired something new and dangerous, the sin nature. You also have a sin nature. You were born with it, and you aren't alone. Every human being except Jesus Christ (Who was virgin born, meaning without a human father) is born spiritually dead and with a sin nature. The sin nature is passed down genetically from Adam through the male in procreation.

We learn this from Romans 5:12, *"Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin [the sin nature] entered into the world, and death through sin [spiritual death], and so death [spiritual death] spread to all men, because all sinned [when Adam sinned]."*

The sin nature resides in the cell structure of the human body and is the inherent opposing force against God. It has an area of weakness which is where temptations to sin originate and it has an area of strength that promotes Satan's policies of evil and human good. We will discuss this in more detail later in the book.

Death frees us from the sin nature

Before you enter heaven you need to leave your sin infected body behind. Sin cannot enter heaven. At death, the body with the sin nature returns to dust. Your soul and human spirit ascend to heaven.

The Human Spirit

The human spirit is the immaterial part of a Christian designed by God to convert spiritual phenomena into understandable application for the spiritual life. It is separate from the soul.

As you are taught the Bible, God the Holy Spirit uses that information to enlighten your human spirit and this is how you comprehend spiritual matters. When you believe the information, through faith perception, it becomes divine wisdom stored in your soul.

Without a human spirit, you would not be able to worship God. It is your human spirit that gives you the means to know and relate to God.

God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth. (John 4:24)

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.
(1 Corinthians 2:14)

How did you get your human spirit? At the moment of salvation, God created in you a human spirit, making you spiritually alive. This is called the second birth, being born again or regeneration. *“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”* (1 John 5:1). God imparts eternal life to your human spirit, not your body.

This is critical, because at physical birth you were born spiritually dead. *“Even when we were dead in our sin, He made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)”* (Ephesians 2:5).

Spiritual birth isn’t seen or sensed but it is very real.
At physical death, your human spirit and soul enter the eternal state and live forever.

Here's what is interesting. Man and woman, husband and wife, can create biological life but only God can give biological life a soul at physical birth and a human spirit at salvation. Mankind does not have the ability to create an eternal soul. Only God can create the soul and human spirit, and they live on forever in eternity.

Body, Soul and Spirit

If you want your soul to live forever in heaven rather than in the Lake of Fire, you must be born again. You must be trichotomous, meaning having a human spirit and a soul housed in your body - body, soul and spirit. This is the distinction from an unbeliever who is dichotomous having only a body and a soul. An unbeliever therefore can't have a spiritual life or comprehend spiritual matters.

Obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls. (1 Peter 1:9)

It is true, the soul can live without a human spirit. That is what an unbeliever does. Also, the soul doesn't *have to* realize the supernatural power of the human spirit. A soul doesn't *have to* go to heaven at death. Sadly, many people will choose to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire.

God is fair and merciful. "*Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth*" (Isaiah 45:22). He gives everyone equal opportunity to be saved and acquire a spiritual life. God desires every soul to spend eternity in heaven with Him, but the choice is always ours.

We choose the eternal destination for our soul when we make the decision to accept or reject Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross.

**The soul of every person,
believer and unbeliever, lives forever**

God the Holy Spirit

The second you put your faith in Jesus Christ, God the Holy Spirit permanently indwells your human spirit, and He seals you as proof of your union with Christ and your membership in God's royal family forever. The ministry of the Holy Spirit gives you the ability to have fellowship with God and to live your spiritual life.

In Him, you also after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

However, the first time you sin after you are saved, your fellowship with God is interrupted and your sin nature takes control. **As a Christian, at any given moment you are either filled with the Holy Spirit or ruled by your sin nature.** There is no overlapping or blending of the two. In Ephesians 5:18 God commands us to "*be filled with the Spirit.*" This tells us that being controlled by the Holy Spirit rather than our sin nature is a decision we must continuously make.

Rebound

When you sin, how do you regain the filling of the Holy Spirit? **The solution is the most basic and important procedure in the Christian life.** My pastor referred to this as the Rebound technique. Rebound is not a Biblical word but it describes God's provision to "bounce back" into fellowship with God and restore the filling of the Holy Spirit after you sin.

Rebounding is simple. It is confessing (naming) in private prayer your known sin directly to God the Father. He promises He will forgive the sin you name and He will also “*cleanse [purify] you from all unrighteousness*” which includes your unknown sin and forgotten sin.

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)

Never forget this is God’s solution to personal sin, what we call Rebound, and use it! **As soon as you realize you have sinned, confess it to God so you can recover the filling of the Holy Spirit.**

God’s Word and the filling of the Holy Spirit give you the power to live your spiritual life. Just as your body needs food for physical nourishment, so also your soul depends on the Word of God for spiritual nourishment and growth.

This is why consistent Bible study under the ministry of a well-qualified pastor is so important.

Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity.
(2 Peter 3:18)

God’s Word Learned and Believed = Soul Strength

The soul is the core of your spiritual life. It is where everything takes place. Your soul manifests the real you. Look at it this way - if we take your mentality, what you think, and your volition, what you choose, hopefully you do the right thing; and you will, if you are oriented to what the Bible says and continue to progress in acquiring the mind of Christ.

COMPARTMENTS OF THE SOUL

If you have a pulse and can recognize yourself in the mirror, congratulations. You are a living human being and therefore you have a soul. The soul was designed by God for the benefit of the human race. The soul has compartments: self-consciousness, volition, mentality and conscience. Just as the physiological heart has four compartments, the soul of both believer and unbeliever has four parts. All souls have these components, but what is in the soul and how it is used determines the soul's worth. Each soul is unique.

So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world. (Philippians 2:15)

Self-Consciousness. Your awareness of self and your surroundings. **I am.**

I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. (Psalm 139:14)

Volition. Freedom to choose, make decisions. **I will.**

Honor your father and mother so that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. (Ephesians 6:2-3)

Mentality. Your thoughts. This is the command center of your soul. **I think.**

For as he thinks within himself, so he is.
(Proverbs 23:7)

Conscience. Your acquired norms and standards designed to protect you. **I ought.**

In view of this, I also do my best to maintain
always a blameless conscience before both
God and before men. (Acts 24:16)

What exactly is your soul? You know it gives your body personality and life, it is invisible, it never dies and it will spend eternity in either heaven or the Lake of Fire. Your soul's destination depends on whether you believe in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. But what is your soul really?

The Word of God calls the soul the heart or inner man. The Bible rarely uses the word heart to refer to the body's physiological pump, that intricate organ which circulates blood, nutrients and oxygen throughout the body. Remember the physical heart is necessary for body maintenance but not essential for life.

That He would grant you, according to the
riches of His glory, to be strengthened with
power through His Spirit in the inner man, so
that Christ may dwell in your hearts through
faith. (Ephesians 3:16-17)

Working together, the four compartments of your soul (self-consciousness, volition, mentality and conscience) have significant functions in your spiritual growth.

Let's look at these in more detail.

Self-Consciousness

You say, "I am." To prove it you pinch yourself. You are alive. Look around. You aren't the only living person. You are aware of your own existence and are able to relate to both animate and inanimate life on earth. Animals have consciousness but not self-consciousness.

At some point, your self-consciousness also makes you aware that there might be a God, the Creator of all you see. How else could the stars and planets stay in orbit? When we wonder how we got here is when we become God conscious. Anywhere on planet Earth, anyone can look up at the sky and realize, Someone created this. Likewise, how else could the intricate parts of the body be assembled so perfectly?

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;
and their expanse is declaring the work of His
hands. Day to day pours forth speech and
night to night reveals knowledge. (Ps 19:1-2)

This awareness is called God consciousness. It is the moment you decide if you want to know more about God or not. God is faithful. He guarantees the gospel message will be given to all who want it, and in their own language. He makes sure all can clearly understand it. All are given an opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as
some count slowness, but is patient toward
you, not willing for any to perish but for all to
come to repentance [change of mind about
Christ]. (2 Peter 3:9)

Positive volition to the saving grace God offers is this change of mind that leads to faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, the guarantee of eternal life.

Volition

The soul has volition. This is your decision maker. It is self-determination, the ability of choice and the guardian of the freedom to make decisions. *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15). Through volition, also known as free will, God makes you responsible for deciding your own destiny. There’s always a choice. God never forces you to do His will.

**Your volition, not your environment,
determines your soul’s worth and destiny**

Volition is your ability to choose either for or against anything in life. You decide the little things, such as whether you will have a chocolate or vanilla shake. You also make the pivotal decisions, such as whom you will marry and where you will go to church. Some of your choices are right, aligned with God’s standards, and some are wrong, opposed to God and His Word. There are also some choices of no consequence. You are responsible for every one of them.

**The decisions you make
will determine the life you lead**

Much of the suffering we endure comes from the bad decisions we make. We might choose to mismanage our health, mismanage our finances or mismanage our relationships. Bad decisions come from negative volition to the mandates of God’s Word.

God has designed the system for you to have a wonderful life. It’s found in His Word, the Bible. This is why it is so important that you learn it, and live it. The Bible illuminates right decisions. God has protocol; a right thing must be done in a right way.

God’s Protocol System is the GPS for your life

Mentality

The French philosopher Descartes said, “I think; therefore, I am.” He is right in the sense that we are physically alive as long as our brain functions. We think; therefore, we live. Thoughts form motives that influence volition that decides action.

You continually choose what to put in the mentality of your soul. On a daily basis you can decide to study God’s Word and add the treasure of divine wisdom into your soul. Or you can fill it with the stinkin’ thinkin’ of human viewpoint. It’s your decision - what the Bible says or the lures of the world.

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Think with sound judgment, as God has assigned to each one of us a standard of thinking from His Word. (Romans 12:2-3)

The soul is a battlefield

Divine viewpoint versus human viewpoint thinking

Divine viewpoint is the mind of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible. Human viewpoint is any system of thinking opposed to God or substituted for divine wisdom. It is obvious which is right.

The mentality of the soul directs motivation, intentions and actions. You are the sum of your thinking:

- Your thoughts are formed by information processed in your soul.

- Your motivation is either love for God, because you have His viewpoint in your soul, or the desires and lusts of the sin nature, because you are using human viewpoint.

- Your intentions are your agenda in life. Will they be God’s or yours?

- Your actions are the choices you make from your thoughts, motivation and intentions of your soul.

Conscience

The soul also contains a conscience. This is the soul's protector and houses the norms and standards upon which your thoughts and actions are based. It is the inner scale of right and wrong. This is the evaluation center for life. It is where the person thinks "I ought or ought not to."

The conscience helps identify choices to filter out wrong thoughts and intentions. This is one reason unbelievers can be moral, upstanding individuals. Their conscience is oriented to divine establishment principles. They obey their conscience even though they are lost spiritually.

For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness [God's Word learned and stored in the soul] and godly sincerity, not in earthly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you. (2 Corinthians 1:12)

Norms and standards are what guide you on how to live life, such as respect for privacy of other people and don't lie or steal. You started learning them from your parents when you were young. As you grow spiritually, your norms and standards incorporate divine viewpoint.

The conscience of the believer will only function as God intends if the norms and standards are formed accurately from the Word of God, the mind of Christ.

**Your Word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)**

I Am

I Will

I Think

I Ought to Strengthen My Soul

YOUR GOAL: A FOCUSED SOUL

Each soul is unique. They all have the same compartments: self-consciousness, volition, mentality and conscience; but the thoughts that fill the soul make the distinction.

The soul of an unbeliever can only be filled with human viewpoint because an unbeliever lacks a human spirit and therefore can't comprehend spiritual matters. Whereas a believer's soul can be filled with divine viewpoint depending on how volition is used.

**We have the mind of Christ.
(1 Corinthians 2:16)**

We have the amazing divine resource of the mind of Christ. To benefit, use your volition to transform your soul to think as Christ thinks. Growing spiritually and developing your soul to focus on Christ is a progression. Stick with it. It is the advance that matters.

Your destiny in Jesus Christ is found in the Bible. God wants you to gain more and more Bible doctrine by studying under a well-qualified pastor. This is how Satan's worldly garbage in your soul will incrementally be replaced by God's Word.

By "qualified" I mean a man who has the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher given to him by the Holy Spirit at salvation. A well-qualified pastor diligently studies from the original languages of the Bible and continually prepares himself to minister to the souls of his congregation.

**Christ in you, the hope of glory.
(Colossians 1:27)**

Right thinking precedes right actions

We use the term “Bible doctrine” to refer to principles and concepts gleaned from the totality of God’s truth recorded in the canon of Scripture. It is all of the divine viewpoint available for us to acquire. Of course, none of us can learn it all. The information is immense. That’s one reason the potential of the spiritual life is so exciting. If we live it as God designed, there is a lot to understand about God and His grace resources.

Think of your soul as a sponge, potentially soaking up everything it’s exposed to, every word and experience. If you choose to associate with maturing believers, especially a pastor who accurately teaches God’s Word, your soul soaks up divine viewpoint. If you hang out with unbelievers and believers in perpetual carnality, or attend a church that replaces sound teaching with other things, your soul is contaminated with human viewpoint. Immature believers who are just beginning to learn God’s Word may find human viewpoint ideas tasty; God views them as repugnant. **Through metabolizing Bible doctrine you develop a discriminating soul palate.**

It is no longer I but Christ in me.
(Galatians 2:20)

Your responsibility is to place the thinking of Christ in your soul. The inevitable pressures of life squeeze your soul. Until your soul strengthens from being filled and stabilized with the mind of Christ, you may react to the pressure with human viewpoint. But as you spend more time thinking divine viewpoint rather than worldly things, you are on the right path advancing toward your goal, a soul focused on Jesus Christ.

Those who love Your doctrine have great peace and security. (Psalm 119:165)

Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.
(1 John 2:15-17)

Your soul is bombarded by human viewpoint. It is the same for all mankind. Yet a focused soul repels human viewpoint. **Bible doctrine in your soul gives you spiritual discernment to recognize the lures of Satan's cosmic system.** That's saying something because Satan is the master deceiver and able to disguise worldly thoughts as very attractive. Heed your conscience as it reveals human viewpoint thinking and then you can immediately recognize any wavering of your focus.

Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them [develop your spiritual faculties] so that your progress [advance in the spiritual life] will be evident to all. (1 Timothy 4:15)

God wants you to be faithful, not flawless

A believer newly focused on Jesus Christ will fail often. The human viewpoint garbage in his soul has yet to be replaced by accurate Bible teaching. If he remains in fellowship and continues to learn God's Word from a well-qualified pastor, truth will supersede that garbage and divine viewpoint will be prominent.

Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my soul to respect Your name. (Psalm 86:11)

**For where your treasure is
there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)**

What is your treasure? Where's your focus? What's the number one thing in your life? If it's growing in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, glorifying God to the maximum and re-presenting Christ to your generation, that's wonderful. This is exactly what God wants you to do. Having a healthy physical heart is important but having a strong healthy soul is essential.

For bodily discipline is only of little profit,
but godliness [your spiritual life] is profitable
for all things, since it holds promise for the
present life and also for the life to come.
(1 Timothy 4:8)

This Scripture refers to having a mature spiritual life. Remember your soul goes with you to heaven. That's why it "holds promise for the life to come." Growing to spiritual maturity requires a lot of self-discipline. Just listening to the teaching of God's Word won't do you any good. You must understand and apply it.

His divine power has granted to us everything
pertaining to life [How do we get it?] through
the true knowledge of Him who called us by
His own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:3)

As you advance in your spiritual life, your soul will get stronger and more valuable. Your goal: keep the focus of your soul on Jesus Christ.

For it is for this we labor and strive, because
we have focused our hope on the living God,
who is the Savior of all men.
(1 Timothy 4:10)

ENEMIES OF THE SOUL

Few souls remain focused on Jesus Christ because the soul's enemies are clever. They seem innocuous, yet they are unrelenting. In this section, we will concentrate on the major soul enemies: sin, arrogance, evil, emotion and lack of spiritual discernment.

Sin

Enticement to sin is continuous. Sin means to miss the mark of God's plan for your life. Sin is deliberately doing that which is wrong or not doing that which is right. It is any thought, word or action that violates the character and standards of God and His mandates.

God is perfect justice; therefore He holds you accountable for your sins, both those done deliberately and those committed through ignorance. All sin originates in thought. **Sin is a matter of volition, even unknown sins.** You decided to do it and you did. No one can force you to sin. God knows the devil didn't make you do it; your volition did. Likewise, God never accepts your plea of ignorance.

Did you know that neglecting to learn God's Word is a sin? It's also foolish. 2 Peter 3:18 is a command from God, *"Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."*

Just because your sin nature zings an unacceptable thought into your mind doesn't mean you turn it into sin. **Temptation is not a sin.** If you have Biblical principles in your soul, your conscience will know it's wrong. Then you can use your positive volition to stop thinking it. It is as simple as that. You have defeated that sin.

Concentrate hard on this next principle because if you don't understand it, sin will defeat you. God will never punish you for a sin because Christ was already judged for it on the cross. All sins were judged then and will not be judged again. Jesus Christ's grace gift of salvation ensures you won't be punished for any sin.

God doesn't punish you for sin but for allowing the sin nature to control your soul, for staying out of fellowship. Through sin, you choose to place yourself outside of His plan. God alerts you about the consequences of defying His will through stages of divine discipline. It starts with warning discipline. Intensive discipline will follow if He doesn't have your attention; then the sin unto death.

We must be able to recognize sin. The Bible presents God's viewpoint on sin: He hates it! The totality of sin is vast. To help you identify sin, here are a few listed in the three categories of sin: mental attitude, verbal and overt.

Mental attitude sins - anger, arrogance, bitterness, covetousness, envy, fear, guilt, hatred, implacability, inordinate competition, jealousy, judging, malice, pride, self-absorption, self-pity, self-righteousness, resentment, vindictiveness and worry.

Verbal sins - bullying, criticizing, gossiping, judging, lying, maligning, retaliation, slander, taking God's name in vain and having temper tantrums.

Overt sins - abuse, addiction, civil disobedience, crime, destruction of property, drunkenness, murder, pornography, rebellion, stealing, sex outside of marriage and violence.

These are merely the edge of the sin garbage pile. In its crevices lurk wily sins. Become more aware of sin by studying God's Word so one doesn't catch you unaware and destabilize your soul.

God's grace provision as promised in 1 John 1:9 solves our dilemma of personal sin. The acrostic NICE may help you remember God's protocol for handling sin.

N - Name It. Name your sin to God the Father in silent prayer. Confessing doesn't have anything to do with feeling sorry for it. Rather it is an acknowledgment.

If we confess our [known] sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [known, unknown and forgotten sins]. (1 John 1:9)

I - Isolate It. Don't let one sin expand into others. Don't be a chain sinner.

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled. (Hebrews 12:15)

C - Clear Your Conscience. Forget the sin. Don't have guilt. Don't promise God you'll never do it again.

One thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. (Philippians 3:13)

E - Execute. Move on in executing your spiritual life. If you are not progressing, you are regressing.

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

God's grace provision for us to handle personal sin is NICE. It is fantastic!

Arrogance

Arrogance is a sin, and I am highlighting it for two reasons. First, God devotes more Scripture to arrogance than to any other sin. He considers it a sin of special danger. Second, arrogance is the basis for sin and evil.

So what is arrogance? Arrogance is conceit, insolence, rejection of authority, vanity, self-centeredness and exaggeration of your own importance. The moment you become preoccupied with yourself (start thinking you had something to do with who you are) you fall into its trap. You have lost sight that everything is from God.

If you have ever sensed fear, panic, doubt or little stabs of anxiety, arrogance has invaded your soul. You have decided that God's promise of security and happiness doesn't apply to you. Omnipotent God can't help you in this situation? Arrogance. See how insidious it is?

Fear insults God's Protocol System (GPS)

Let's consider the arrogance of Christian activism. You decide the United States should be a Christian nation. Why is this arrogance? Because in imposing your views on others, you have decided God made a mistake in giving volition and free will to mankind.

Arrogance here makes you presume you have the duty to make people believe, or to change people. Yet every person has the right to choose to believe in Christ as Savior or not; to choose to follow His GPS or not.

God saves people - You don't

Let's consider the arrogance of unhappiness. You decide through self-deception that happiness comes from people, circumstances and the things of the world such as money or success. God disagrees, explaining repeatedly in the Bible that happiness is the result of a healthy soul.

Let's consider authority arrogance. You decide you are justified to ignore legitimate authority. Taxes are too high so you hide some of your income. Speed limits are too low and you are a good driver so it is okay to speed. You think your boss is treating you unfairly so you talk about him behind his back hoping he'll get fired. God says unfairness is never justification for defying proper authority. When you arrogantly disobey any authority you have put yourself above God's Word which demands you obey all those who are in authority over you.

Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. (Romans 13:1)

Arrogance starts in self-justification where you rationalize your thoughts and actions. It then progresses to self-deception where your view of reality is distorted. This leads to self-absorption where your concern is only for yourself. You are self-serving, having an exaggerated belief in your own importance and unrealistic expectations of others. Arrogance is a complex of sins that if left unchecked will lead to self-destruction.

I call this AI. I don't mean artificial intelligence, but rather arrogance and ignorance. Focusing on yourself rather than on God is arrogance. Being unaware of the dangers of prioritizing human viewpoint over God's Word is ignorance. In the maze of arrogance you become ignorant of the condition of your spiritual life.

Your sin nature is dead set against you awakening to your sins. So it keeps fanning the flames of self-justification, the first step of arrogance. This is what trapped you in the sinful thinking in the first place. You find it so easy to rationalize your behavior and convince yourself that you were right to do what you did.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. (1 John 1:6)

Looking for sins in others is arrogance. Thinking you aren't being treated by others the way you should be treated is arrogance. Being surprised by others' sins is arrogance. Wanting to change others is arrogance. See what I mean about sneaky?

Today, one of Satan's most effective ways to distract believers is getting them to buy into improving his world. This is crusader arrogance. Crusades are led by social media influencers, pastors and Christian activists. They crusade for solutions to man's problems through social action and social justice. This is humanism, man trying to find God through man and man trying to resolve issues through human solutions. It is prevalent.

Satan exploits believers through their own arrogance. Arrogance is the super food of the cosmic system and it is a virus. Just as with any virus, it infects your soul before you realize you've been exposed.

What is God's solution for the sin of arrogance? It is humility, the king of all virtues

Humility is teachability, using your volition to learn how to think with the mind of Christ. Humility is an acquired spiritual skill that allows teachability to God's Word. Humility will keep arrogance from overtaking your soul. It is understanding you can do nothing apart from God's grace. *"But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more"* (Romans 5:20). Humility keeps you God oriented, grace oriented, authority oriented and free of the arrogance virus.

God leads the humble in justice, and He teaches the humble His way. (Psalm 25:9)

Evil

Everything we do starts as a thought and this is where evil will attack. Evil is even sneakier than arrogance. It is the genius of Satan to distort and replace God's system of grace. Satan takes God's Word, twists it, and then wants you to believe it. When you do, you allow evil into your soul; evil, once admitted, embeds itself.

To recognize evil, understand it is Satan's system and is completely opposed to God's policy of grace. Evil is the policy used by Satan as the ruler of this world to manipulate and control. It is his substitution for the divine design God set up for the human race. All evil has two sources: sin and erroneous thinking.

The most evil thing in the world is organized religion created by Satan to counterfeit God's plan of grace. Religion is man seeking to please God on the basis of what man does (for example, legalism and false teaching promoting salvation through works, behavior or baptism). If you link anything to grace, it cancels out grace.

Let me clarify. Christianity is not a religion; it is a personal and permanent relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Evil is not always sin But all sin is evil

Read that as many times as needed for it to sink into your soul. Evil is the strategy Satan crafted to rule the world. It is anything that opposes or displeases God. As you mature spiritually, it will be easier to recognize evil and prevent it from infiltrating your thinking. We are warned to not be influenced by evil. 3 John 1:11 says, *"Do not imitate what is evil, but what is good."*

This highlights the distinction of divine good from human good. Human good is evil because it is produced apart from the filling of the Holy Spirit.

Let's look at some disguises of evil:

-Having a ministry that asks for money or sells products is evil. God's Word is to be given freely.

-Driving an electric vehicle isn't sinful, but if you do it because of the climate change lie, it is evil. Only God will destroy this planet, and in His timing.

-Thinking government's role is to abolish sickness and poverty is evil. The world's problems can never be solved through humanism; only through God and His Word.

-Believing Mormons, Muslims, Buddhists and Christians all worship the same God is evil. There is only one God and only one way to God - through Jesus Christ.

-Supporting a candidate is fine; but if you do it thinking he or she is the answer to what ails our nation, it is evil. Spiritual growth of a nation's citizens is the solution.

-Buying into Hollywood's lures that happiness comes from friends, wealth, beauty or success is evil. I call these cosmic system opiates. Happiness is soul generated.

Evil will always be with us because we live in Satan's world and it is his system. Countering evil takes vigilance to stay filled with the Holy Spirit, be consistent in the daily study of God's Word and always think grace. If you don't fill your soul with divine viewpoint discernment, your thinking will slowly revert to Satan's system of evil. Good apples rot when in contact with a rotten one.

Grace orientation counters evil

If you are a new believer, it may take years to turn your human viewpoint thinking into that of Jesus Christ's. Be patient. Stick with daily spiritual growth and distortions of the Word of God will be replaced in your mentality.

He who listens to me [divine wisdom] will live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil. (Proverbs 1:33)

Emotion

Emotion is a genuine appreciator in life. It's fine to well up with emotion when you hear the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," see a full moon, watch the birth of your child or win an event. These pleasures are normal and momentary. But any emotion that lasts for awhile should cause you to take notice.

Emotion is not rational. When emotion overrides your thinking it becomes an enemy of your soul. If you choose to get into emotionalism, Satan has outwitted you. "*So that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes*" (2 Corinthians 2:11).

One way Satan does this is through false teaching which sounds appealing but isn't Biblically accurate and is void of spiritual nutritional value. False teaching confuses and distracts.

Another scheme of Satan is the proliferation of churches that have replaced the accurate teaching of God's Word with the rah-rah of praise and worship services. Emotionalism is not substantive and it will not sustain you when pressure hits.

Emotion will manipulate and govern your life if you let it. God says that the emotional believer is a seasick child, queasy from lack of God's Word in his soul.

We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of false doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming: but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4:14-15)

**Make a conscientious effort to put
distance between your soul and emotional sins**

Emotional sins devastate the soul

A lot of the pain and misery you may be going through is because you've let emotion control your soul. You are being held hostage to anxiety, confusion, regrets and insecurity. You are on an emotional roller coaster, up one day and down the other. You can't afford to live this way. Put divine viewpoint back in control of your soul.

Emotion, like the sin nature, resides in the body and therefore will decompose after physical death. Knowing that emotion accompanies the sin nature should reinforce the danger inherent in emotionalism. When you are emotional, you have faulty thinking or you are not thinking at all.

Control the mentality of your soul and you'll keep the emotions of your body in check

Emotion will be with you throughout your life. As you grow older you're going to experience health issues, loss of loved ones and maybe financial duress. These pressures, along with the normal cognitive decline in aging, may make you more susceptible to emotionalism.

The weight of constant suffering can open the door for doubt and fear, especially if you have a disease you are fighting. You are trying hard but it increasingly frustrates you. Emotionalism kicks in and seizes your soul.

Is there a solution to this type of internal pressure? Is there something that you can grab onto to stabilize your thinking and regain control of your soul? You bet there is.

Let us hold fast to our faith without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. (Hebrews 10:23)

Focus on Jesus Christ, His thinking and the divine resources He has given you. Demonstrate to others that God's grace is sufficient and sustaining.

Lack of Spiritual Discernment

The final enemy we will study is lack of spiritual discernment. This attacks the soul of the maturing believer who recognizes blatant sins and evils but lacks enough Bible doctrine to perceive the tricky nuances of both. Just when you are confident that you recognize sin and evil, Satan attacks from your blind side.

He does this by giving you innocuous choices, only one of which fully glorifies God. If your soul isn't firmly grounded in Bible doctrine, you will be tempted to take a path that veers slightly from the true north of divine viewpoint. You will have committed no sin or evil but will have lost an opportunity to glorify God.

Spiritual discernment is the eyes of the soul, seeing the world as God sees it, not through the distorted, warped eyes of mankind. When you have enough of God's Word in your soul to have spiritual discernment you not only respect His truths but readily recognize Satan's lures, and appreciate the difference. You accept the evaluation of the mirror of God's Word.

Think of it this way: when your soul reaches the elevated status of spiritual discernment, you readily see Satan's traps. You not only differentiate between right and wrong and between divine good and human good, but you recognize that which is merely a waste of time.

Set your mind on the things above not on the things that are on earth. (Colossians 3:2)

You discern good, better and best and always choose best. You make your decisions based on their eternal ramifications, not the false promise of material pleasure or satisfaction. You choose God's Way, the eternal way, avoiding innocent but interesting side roads. Your intent is solely on reaching your objective as soon as possible: maximum glorification of God.

Even when you progress to spiritual maturity and discernment, you will make mistakes because you have a sin nature. Those mistakes won't be major in themselves, but they can slowly accumulate and progress into key distractions from the spiritual life.

Here are some examples:

- Your close friends may be nice but their lack of spiritual focus distracts you from your growth.

- Your time may be spent doing things that aren't wrong but that take time away from the daily intake and application of God's Word.

- You may not be sinning in your decisions, but because they are not the best decisions, they create opportunities for Satan to distract you and slow your momentum.

- You may waste time on non-essentials, neglecting the essentials to advancing in your spiritual life.

The believer *without* spiritual discernment makes many right choices but blunders into situations that threaten his soul. The believer *with* spiritual discernment glorifies God by making the best choices in life.

I pray you have spiritual discernment and your volition is motivated by a broad inventory of divine viewpoint gained through years of daily accurate Bible study.

Whoever loves disciplined instruction loves spiritual discernment but he who hates reproof [from the Bible] is stupid.
(Proverbs 12:1)

God is blunt, isn't He? Either you love His Word and learn it daily, or you are stupid. God doesn't negotiate or compromise His truth.

**You are as spiritually intelligent
as your positive volition wills you to be**

SOUL MALADIES

The soul [when controlled by the sin nature] is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

What happens if you continuously wave the white flag of surrender to the enemies of your soul; if you refuse to store Bible doctrine in your soul? Obviously, you won't have a soul focused on Jesus Christ. Instead, your soul will sicken from believing the lies of that genius Satan and his cosmic system. Just as you can have a diseased heart or liver, so too, you can have a sick soul.

A Sick Soul

The first symptom of a soul under control of the sin nature is an odor. Human viewpoint is stinkin' thinkin.' It is thinking that is based on humanism and not on God. There is no Biblical basis to stinkin' thinkin.'

Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their deeds. (2 Corinthians 11:14-15)

The world you live in is Satan's world. It is abundant with appealing contaminants and pressure-filled. Without having discernment from God's Word, it's likely you will allow stress to get into your soul.

**Adversity is inevitable
Stress is optional**

Adversity (pressure) is what life does to you, everything from a dishwasher that doesn't work, to someone who cuts you off in traffic, to a mean boss or an illness of a loved one. Stress is what you do to yourself. You allow a mass of metal and wire to frustrate you. And if the dishwasher doesn't do it, the repairman not coming on time does. You allow the jerk in traffic to ruin your day or you fixate on personnel issues at work. **Stress distracts and weakens your soul.**

In all these examples, you have allowed the inevitable adversities of life to become sewage in your soul. As the sewage builds up, your soul's vitality is sapped and there is decreasing room for your spiritual life.

Not every soul reaches extreme dysfunction that destroys the sanity of the soul, but perpetual sin always leaves bruises in the soul, and sometimes on the body.

A Bruised Soul

Some believers don't wait long to name their sins to God; therefore they avoid sickening their souls. However, no sin is without consequences. Sin is like a bruise. Your soul has taken a hit and shows it. *"The prudent sees the evil and hides himself, but the naïve go on, and are punished for it"* (Proverbs 22:3). Prudence means understanding that some sins have longer lasting and more damaging consequences than others.

A Stunted Soul

Your soul is designed by God to be filled with information recorded for you in the Bible. God wants you to strengthen your soul by growing spiritually. But unless you are consistently learning and applying God's Word, you are going to have a stunted soul and a marginalized spiritual life. Believers with stunted souls never know God's design, will, plan and purpose for their life. What a waste. *"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"* (Romans 11:33).

A Double-Minded Soul

A double-minded believer is inconsistent. He tries to convince himself that Bible doctrine and stinkin' thinkin' can coexist. He blends God's Word to meet his brand of sin and bends to the demands of the world. James 1:8 says, "*Being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*"

An Anesthetized Soul

No doubt when you see a dentist for a root canal, he uses a local anesthetic so you feel no pain. Your soul, too, can become anesthetized to the pain of sin, evil and human good. Your conscience can become so clogged it no longer warns you about your enemies. Through negative volition you have become a spiritual zombie, superficially sustained by human viewpoint. Because your soul needs the nutrition of Bible doctrine and you've neglected it, you waste away while assuring yourself you're okay. Divine norms and standards are the first to go. Right from wrong gets blurred. You no longer sense remorse or conviction to God's plan. "*He who hardens his heart will fall into calamity*" (Proverbs 28:14).

A Hijacked Soul

Your thoughts can be hijacked by: distractions, being assaulted by stinkin' thinkin', lack of concentration, political bitterness and forgetting Bible doctrine. Doubt and confusion ensue. Much of this hijacking is going on through social media, television, gaming and the education system.

Young people especially are being lured into a fantasy world by influencers who promise things they can't deliver. Their sense of reality is distorted or may even cease to exist.

Seniors are vulnerable to the never ending call to worry about pandemics, inflation, military conflicts and political intrigue, tending to push anxiety and fear into their souls.

A Runaway Soul

This is a believer who doesn't obey God's mandates and continually sins without using rebound. As a runaway from God, he is relying on his own knowledge and his own power. He is not using the power of the Holy Spirit and God's Word. The longer he stays away, the deeper his soul becomes mired in stinkin' thinkin' and the more difficult for him to return to his spiritual life. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is a perfect example of a runaway soul (Luke 15:11-32).

A runaway soul has no brakes because the conscience of the soul has few or no divine norms and standards. I think this is what is going on in our nation today. There are many people who have no brakes in their souls. The brakes are divine viewpoint that caution against doing certain things.

Parents and grandparents, if you don't prepare the souls of your children you are guaranteeing they will have no brakes. Plant God's Word in their souls.

A Fragmented Soul

The longer human viewpoint garbage and sin stay in the soul, the more "sewer gas" is produced. When sewer gas builds enough pressure, it explodes into messy fragments. Similarly, a soul is fragmented by perpetual sin. A believer who remains out of fellowship with God acts like an unbeliever.

1 Corinthians 3:3 says, *"For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not carnal and are you not walking like mere men [unbelievers]?"* Of course you are.

Sorry, those of you who were saved years ago, ignored God's Word and are just now starting to grow spiritually, your soul is filled with stinkin' thinkin.' You catch whiffs of the stink every time you get angry, have guilt, judge or hate. Only whiffs, because perpetual carnality has dulled your spiritual senses and deadened your conscience.

To those who are defiled [carnal believers]
and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both
their mind and their conscience are defiled.
(Titus 1:15)

The perpetually carnal believer, defiled, places himself under the power of his sin nature. Darkness coats his soul, and at its worst, soul fragmentation becomes psychosis, neurosis and mental breakdown. A Christian can literally drive himself crazy when he allows human viewpoint to rule his soul. This is a result of negative volition and rejection of God's Word.

They walk in the futility of their mind being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart. (Ephesians 4:17-18)

Do not harden your souls. (Hebrews 3:8)

Scar Tissue of the Soul

When the mind and the conscience are defiled, scar tissue forms in the soul. Scar tissue causes the mind to quit thinking as the believer is sucked into the cosmic vortex, the lures of the world. I call this following the zeitgeist, the spirit of the times. Not interested in the things of God, believers with souls hardened with scar tissue are walking in darkness. Their ignorance of divine intent has alienated them from God's protection and blessing. Life becomes a frantic search for happiness.

In their darkened state, their only choice for recovery is to respond to the enforced humility of God's discipline. Divine discipline is always done in grace and love to correct and encourage us. It is designed to be an attitude adjustment to get us back on track in our spiritual life rather than going out by way of self-destruction.

Your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:36)

Recovery

If you've allowed your soul to be taken over by any of these maladies, change your mind and respond to the divine discipline you are under. Recover before it is too late. As long as you are alive, God still has a plan for you. Rebound to get your soul back under control of the Holy Spirit. This is the start. Then it takes persistent study of God's Word to chip away the scar tissue. And do not forget the application, that's key. It won't be easy but it is doable if you rely on God's grace resources.

Sin Unto Death

There is a sin leading to death. (1 John 5:16)

Suppose when you sin you don't rebound. You sin again and again; you ignore God's mandate to confess your sins to Him. When scar tissue builds to the point of hardening your soul completely, God takes you out in the final stage of divine discipline, the sin unto death.

You don't die because of your sins, but because of your continued refusal to respond to divine discipline. If you rebel against God's authority and reject using His divine solution to the problem of sin, God will take you home early. Satan has won the battle for earthly control of your soul even though your soul will reside in heaven with God. Not a pleasant picture, is it? You have failed God and embraced Satan.

Before leaving the subject of the sin unto death, I want to be sure you know - without a doubt - God decides the time and manner for everyone to die. No one will die a second before that time. Yet because perpetually carnal believers choose through negative volition to defy God and His plan, God calls them home early.

God's timing is perfect; our volition is faulty.

SOUL SORROW

At times, your soul may become heavy with grief, not because of scar tissue but because of the suffering or the death of a loved one. Grief is normal. God actually commands such sorrow. *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep”* (Romans 12:15).

The point is to be sure your sorrow is not filled with anger, resentment or self-pity. No circumstance, even the death of a loved one, can steal your happiness unless you allow it. Beware of mental attitude sins such as bitterness or doubt. Steady your soul with confidence in God’s unfailing love and His perfect plan and timing.

The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the Lord. (Job 1:21)

Death isn’t the end. It is the beginning. Remember the soul lives forever. Death is the transition of life into eternity. In the death of a believer, it is a time of joy because you know the separation is temporary and you will be reunited soon.

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now
for a little while, you have been distressed.
(1 Peter 1:6)

However, how do you deal with the awful angst over those who die as unbelievers? *“Do not grieve as others who have no hope”* (1 Thessalonians 4:13) does not apply. Stay optimistic. All it takes is one second of faith, at any time, for a person to go to heaven. And be objective. The justice of God must judge a person’s use of their free will for or against Jesus Christ.

There are other circumstances apart from death that could prompt sorrow. For example, the disciples had sorrow anticipating Christ's departure. *"Because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts"* (John 16:6).

You may have a heavy heart over your son or daughter who is on the My Way Highway, veering away from God. They are mired in humanism, self-induced misery and materialism, not interested in their spiritual life and not seeing the need to learn about God. *"Fools despise [divine] wisdom and instruction"* (Proverbs 1:7).

You grieve over the lack of sound Bible teaching in so many of our churches contributing to our decline. *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"* (Hosea 4:6). You are disheartened by mass shootings and social media influencers corrupting our youth.

What can you do to dispel sorrow from your soul?

When He rose from prayer, Jesus came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, and said to them, 'Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray.' (Luke 22:45)

Refocus on Jesus Christ. He is in control. *"My grace is sufficient for you"* (2 Cor 12:9). **Pray** for your children. **Pray** for your nation. *"Pray to Me and I will listen to you"* (Jer 29:12). **Accelerate your spiritual growth.** *"He grew strong in faith"* (Rom 4:20). As you advance to spiritual maturity, God's blessings will overflow to others in your spheres of influence.

Stand firm in the Lord. (Philippians 4:1)

Limit the duration of sorrow. You are being observed. Let others see you stabilize your thoughts and move forward in your spiritual life. Be careful to not allow excessive sorrow or adversity to sway your soul.

So that no one would be disturbed by these afflictions [the Greek word for disturbed is *saino*]; for you yourselves know that we have been destined for this. (1 Thessalonians 3:3)

The word *saino* is the key here. It means to be disturbed or disquieted or rearranged such as movement from side-to-side. Think of a dog's tail wagging back and forth. This is what excessive soul sorrow and affliction will do to the mentality of believers who aren't careful.

This is very interesting. *Saino* is akin to another Greek word *seio* and we get from it the English words seismic and seismology. A Christian under sorrow or affliction should never allow his thinking to be rearranged such as the topography of the earth is after an earthquake.

Anxiety will rearrange your soul

If you haven't stored Bible doctrine in your soul, affliction will convert to anxiety and anxiety will rearrange your life. It will change you, turn you inside out. No believer should be shaken or dislodged from the firm stand of faith.

You have cancer, you have Parkinson's, you have other problems. How is it affecting your soul? Are you wanting God to take it away? When you allow affliction to shake your soul and dislodge you from your faith, you lose confidence in God and you are spiritually neutralized.

I am under affliction but I do not have any anxiety. (2 Corinthians 4:8)

That's a powerful testimony from the Apostle Paul, a mature believer. Burdened excessively, he was able to stabilize his soul because he had acquired:

Wisdom ... Knowledge ... Discretion ... Understanding

Wisdom .. Knowledge .. Discretion .. Understanding

I call these **The Fantastic Four**. Acquire them and you will have a stable and joy-full soul. Notice this proverb starts off recognizing your thinking controls your destiny.

For when wisdom enters your heart and knowledge is pleasant to your soul; then discretion will guard you and understanding will watch over you. (Proverbs 2:10-11)

Wisdom enters your heart [the mentality of your soul] from the study, retention and the application of God's Word. Wisdom must be acquired; it is not inherited. God's wisdom gives you direction, protection and purpose in life. It is your soul's strength.

Knowledge is pleasant to your soul when it becomes something you want, and hold onto, as treasure. You hunger for God's Word and respect that acquiring it is a choice you must make daily. It is your soul's wealth.

Discretion will guard you. It is like a blinking light that warns of dangers ahead. By acquiring the mind of Christ, you can discern right from wrong. You readily identify evil, human viewpoint and other lures of Satan's world. It is your soul's shield.

Understanding will watch over you. It requires you to have the truth of God's Word, divine viewpoint. This gives you objective optimism. You know what the future holds and this is the huge advantage you have as a Christian. It is your soul's insulation and orientation.

**Appropriate these fantastic divine advantages
and your soul will be endlessly refreshed**

GUARD YOUR SOUL

Satan and his cosmic system won't stop trying to distract and discourage you from becoming spiritually mature. The lures will be directed at your thoughts, the mentality of your soul. Satan knows if he can influence your thinking, your intentions and actions will follow.

These lures can be subtle. The world offers many appealing things that seem innocuous. It is easy to get sucked into them and away from your spiritual life. The attacks on your soul often come when you least expect them and that might not be 24/7. Rather they may be short invasions into your thoughts to catch you off guard.

God has a strategy for you to resist

So how can you guard your vulnerable soul from unrelenting attacks? How can you equip yourself to win the battles and bring glory to God? As is true for any soldier, you, a spiritual warrior, need to gear up and train.

Jesus Christ, your commander-in-chief, orders you to strap on His armor and use His grace resources. He is not asking you, He is telling you. You can defy His orders but at the peril of the stability of your soul.

We are instructed by God, through the Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 6:11-18 to guard our souls. Paul uses this military analogy to communicate the need to stand up against Satan's strategies to defeat us.

The Armor of God

Put on the full armor of God so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [human beings], but against the rulers [highest rank of the demonic army], against the powers [lesser ranked demon officers], against the world forces of this darkness [ambassador demons who influence the rulers and decision-makers of the world], against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places [rank and file demons].

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

Stand firm therefore, having belted your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

And having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

In addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints (Ephesians 6:11-18).

Guard your soul by using the armor of God

You already know that the first step in guarding your soul is staying filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Without it you are defenseless against the incessant onslaught of the sin nature, Satan and his forces and the human viewpoint of his world. The Holy Spirit and the sin nature are in contention for control of your soul. Your volition decides who wins at any given moment.

**Watch over your soul with all diligence,
for from it flow the springs of life. (Proverbs 4:23)**

We are going to examine the armor of God piece by piece so that you will wear it comfortably and use it confidently.

Stand firm therefore, having buckled the belt
of truth around your waist.

This metaphor emphasizes truth needs to be the anchor in your life. Truth is revealed in the Bible. John 8:31-32, *“If you continue in My Word then you will know the truth.”* By learning God’s Word you put truth in and around you, and belt your armor to it. Without truth, the rest of your armor lies in a useless heap at your feet.

John wrote in 3 John 1:4, *“I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”* If you walk in truth, you are also able to walk in the lie. Satan is the father of lies and a master counterfeiter. This is why you need The Fantastic Four as part of your gear.

God demands protocol which means a right thing must be done in a right way. If you don’t understand this truth about the spiritual life you wind up doing a lot of right things but in the wrong way and it will all be burned up at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

**Follow God’s Protocol System, your GPS
as detailed in the Bible, and you will stand firm**

Satan's number one objective is to prevent you from putting on the belt of truth and he does this by counterfeiting the truth, often through organized religion and distracting you by your own good intentions. Learning God's Word gives you what I call spiritual x-ray vision and this is how you discern the truth from the lies.

Put on the breastplate [body armor] of righteousness.

A breastplate protects your vital organs and allows you to survive soul attacks unscathed. This is not referring to God's righteousness that you received at salvation. Rather it is experiential righteousness which is the spiritual capacity you can develop after you are saved. This righteousness is potential if you live in obedience to God's mandates (maybe you will or maybe you won't).

Developing capacity righteousness is like you putting on a spiritual bullet-proof vest as you progress to spiritual maturity. **Did you know that through the consistent intake of God's Word, you preserve your life?** *"My son, do not forget My teaching, but let your heart keep My commandments; for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you"* (Proverbs 3:1-2). This is a divine promise for you.

The next piece of gear Paul says we must use is our combat boots.

Put combat boots on your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Imagine rushing into battle with bare feet! In minutes, you would be bloodied and limping, useless as a soldier and a laughing stock to all. That's exactly the pain and humiliation you will suffer if you go into spiritual battle without gearing up and training.

Remember that Paul says we are to stand firm against the strategies of the devil. The spiritual life requires balance and stability of surefootedness. This is what your combat boots, the gospel's guarantee of eternal security and Bible doctrine inculcated in your soul, give you. The enemy will try to knock you off your feet, destabilize you, so your effectiveness as a Christian warrior is neutralized.

Your boots also remind you that you have one priority after salvation - learning to replicate the lifestyle of Christ by identifying with His thinking; absorbing divine viewpoint today, tomorrow, the next day. **Satan and his world give no warning before they attack.** Your only defense is advancing to spiritual maturity.

"Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). As a Christian warrior you need to understand the saving grace of the gospel and be ready to tell others about it. You need to reflect you are surefooted, confident in what Christ has given you and optimistic about your eternal destiny. The lost man should be able to see these attributes and see the stability in your life, the peace in your soul, and your confidence of eternal security by means of accepting God's grace gift of salvation.

Peace with God brings confidence

In every circumstance of life, take up the shield of faith [Scripture] with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

You have a shield of faith as part of your strategy against the devil. ***"Stand firm in the faith"*** (1 Cor 16:13).

Have you noticed a similarity in the components of your armor? They all include God's Word in the mentality of your soul. This links your armor.

The fiery darts of Satan can attack in many guises, including worry, doubt, boredom, loneliness, adversity, even prosperity. If your soul is vulnerable, some of these “darts” will feel like bombs as they explode.

The fiery darts are designed to cripple you spiritually, to neutralize you as an effective Christian warrior. Fear is a great crippler. **Fear focuses on the problem while faith sees and trusts God’s solutions.** *“We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Cor 4:18).

Faith is how we perceive reality in the unseen, including the invisible essence of God. This is a terrific divine rationale to use with His promises. God knows. God is all-powerful. God is love. Faith is like a fortress made up of thousands of promises. There are over 7,000 in the Bible but you need to know some to claim them.

Faith deflects attacks - Trust God and His Word

The Spartan army was famous for their shield maneuvers during combat. They would lock shields and get under them like a turtle shell so the enemy arrows wouldn’t harm them. Sometimes they would fight as a phalanx, locking shields and smashing through the enemy as they advanced.

You will have opportunities to lock shields with fellow believers and hold your shield high over friends who have gone down. This means you pray for them, encourage them with God’s Word, uphold them. The Lord put His shield over His disciples and prayed for their protection. *“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one”* (John 17:15).

This is encouraging - the Lord intervenes on your behalf! *“He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:25).

When you guard your soul with the shield of faith, recalling the Biblical principles stored in your soul, you will fend off Satanic attacks and lures. The antidote is God's truth. Divine viewpoint always prevails over human viewpoint. Satan, for all his power, has no weapon powerful enough to penetrate the shield of faith.

Take the helmet of salvation.

This metaphor is a clear picture of protecting the mentality of your soul, what you think. **Your thoughts are where the enemy will seek to get a foothold in your life.** The first thing any young Christian must learn is the assurance of their salvation. If you are not confident that you are going to heaven, you cannot advance in your spiritual life. Doubt is a sin and a failure to trust God.

John made it very plain in 1 John 5:11-13, *"The testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so you may know you have eternal life."*

This helmet is in place forever, protecting your soul forever. God watches over you now on earth and throughout eternity. This is security.

And the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

This is our one offensive weapon. The sword we are required to use is the combination of God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is available to every believer through the filling of the Holy Spirit, which gives the sword power. If Jesus Christ relied on this power to sustain His humanity to execute the plan of God and complete His mission on the cross (and He did!), how much more dependent are we on this same power?!

When the Lord was tested by Satan as recorded in the Bible in Luke 4:1-13, He used Scripture to defeat these attacks. Every time Satan threw up a temptation, the Lord answered, *“It is written. It is written. It is written.”* There is nothing on this planet stronger than the living Word of God. *“The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever”* (Isaiah 40:8).

The Scripture that you have in your Bible has to get in your head for it to benefit you and be effective armor. It better be in your head if you want to win this war. Having a Bible doesn't mean you know how to use it. You have to be taught it and that's why you need to study under the ministry of a qualified pastor-teacher.

Why is God's Word so important?

The Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and the marrow, and is a critic of the thoughts and intentions of the mind. (Hebrews 4:12)

Both believers and unbelievers have souls. Therefore, the Word teaches us to distinguish between that which is soulish (human viewpoint, thoughts any unbeliever could have) and that which is spiritual (divine viewpoint, the thinking of Jesus Christ). **Having a human spirit, the means to comprehend spiritual matters and worship God, separates believers from unbelievers.**

God's Word is truth. It enters your soul through your human spirit when you are filled with the Holy Spirit. You learn it from accurate teaching and you believe it through faith perception. The Word of God penetrates, divides, distinguishes and critiques.

The Word of God penetrates your soul, divides you from unbelievers and critiques your thoughts

Even as the mechanics to living your spiritual life are revealed in the Bible so also is the power to live it. You must believe God's Word and appropriate its doctrines and promises into your soul in order to have divine power. Appropriate means to set apart for a specific use, to take possession of and to make use of it for self.

When you are positive towards God's Word it becomes a sword that is able to cut deeply into you for your benefit. It changes your mental attitude, critiques you, guides you and gives you lasting peace. This is the secret to a guarded and content soul.

Although God gives you a sword of power, He never commands you to attack. He gives you the necessary armor to protect your soul, not attack the enemies of your soul. Any attacking is God's prerogative. **God's Word saturating your soul defends you from all enemies, both human and invisible.** You never need to defend it against those who defame it. The Word of God defends itself. Guard it in your soul. Express it through your thoughts, intentions and actions.

The principle of being on the defense against Satan, not the offense, can't be overstated. Leave any attack against Satan or any who advance his agendas in God's hands. God's command to you is to "stand firm." God doesn't condone Christian activism. You aren't here to clean up the devil's world. The object of your spiritual life is to grow to spiritual maturity and to glorify Him.

Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects ... increasing in the knowledge of God. (Colossians 1:10)

Let's look at David, one of the greatest believers of all time. As a youth, David lived alone in vast fields tending to his father's sheep and diligently studying God's Word. From gaining an understanding of God through His Word, David developed trust in God and His provisions.

David knew, without a doubt, God would protect him and provide for him. David also recognized the need to study during peaceful times to be prepared for God to use him in times of adversity. David was ready when God called upon him to stand up to Goliath. He declared this comforting principle for the Christian life:

“The battle is the Lord’s” (1 Sam 17:47)
This is a rally call for all of us

David was distinguished from his fellow Israelites by his strength of soul. The Israeli soldiers were clothed in intimidating armor and carried deadly swords yet they cowered with fear because their souls were filled with human viewpoint. They were focused on the problem - the murderous giant before them.

David wasn’t a captive to fear because he had his eyes on the solution - the Lord. *“Taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Good weapons and armor did not destroy Goliath. The power and grace of God did, working through David and his slingshot.

God gives you the mechanics for living your spiritual life. Learn them, make them your own, and you can overcome every attack you’ll encounter. Only when you completely depend on God, only when you pick up and put on God’s full armor do you have the invincibility of His power. Then you’ll be able, as David did, to confidently face all enemies. This is because your soul is filled with God’s truth, and guarded.

David was fighting a champion backed by all the powers of hell. But as God’s servant, David possessed much greater strength, confidence and wisdom. Why? Because he was clothed with humility, geared up with God’s armor and used God’s problem-solving devices.

Your Soul Needs a FLOT Line

FLOT is a military acronym that stands for Forward Line of Troops and is a way to remember the powerful resources God gives you to strengthen and guard your soul. Think of a FLOT line as a defensive perimeter around your soul, a main line of resistance against soul attacks. A FLOT line prevents the outside sources of adversity from ever becoming stress in your soul.

God has designed an amazing plan for your life, one of soul contentment in the midst of hardships and prosperity. Every problem you will ever face has a solution stated in the Bible. You discover the solutions by learning God's Word in the power of the filling of the Holy Spirit and studying under a well-qualified pastor.

God gives you ten problem-solving devices. When learned and used they form a personal FLOT line that protects your soul and gives you the spiritual capacity to handle any difficulty.

God's 10 Problem-Solving Devices

These problem-solving devices were taught to me by my pastor, R. B. Thieme, Jr.

- PSD #1 - Rebound
- PSD #2 - Filling of the Holy Spirit
- PSD #3 - Faith-Rest Drill
- PSD #4 - Grace Orientation
- PSD #5 - Doctrinal Orientation
- PSD #6 - Personal Sense of Destiny
- PSD #7 - Personal Love for God
- PSD #8 - Impersonal Love for All Mankind
- PSD #9 - Sharing the Happiness of God
- PSD #10 - Occupation with Christ

Rebound solves the problem of personal sins.

Filling of the Holy Spirit solves the problem of the sin nature.

Faith-Rest Drill solves the problem of adversity.

Grace Orientation solves the problem of man trying to please God through his own efforts.

Doctrinal Orientation provides the solutions to all problems.

Personal Sense of Destiny answers the question of why am I here.

Personal Love for God provides the motivation to be obedient to God and His protocol system.

Impersonal Love for All Mankind solves people problems.

Sharing the Happiness of God provides lasting happiness and tranquility of soul.

Occupation with Christ solves the problem of unrealistic expectations and sets the priorities for life.

When you learn and use these problem-solving devices, you will find that no problem or situation is insurmountable. As you grow spiritually and use what you learn, your faith will grow stronger and you will experience life with a brand-new perspective, God's perspective.

You can find detailed information on each of these in my book, "Christian Problem Solving."

YOUR SOUL IN AGING

My flesh may fail but God is the strength of my soul and my portion forever. (Ps 73:26)

We have talked about your soul being the real you and living forever. Did you realize that your soul doesn't age? Your soul doesn't grow old. As a Christian with positive volition who is following God's protocol system and progressing in spiritual maturity, your soul never reaches an apex.

Eternity is perpetual learning - forever soul growth

Wisely redeem the time you have remaining on earth by strengthening your soul through daily nourishment of the mind of Christ. Exercise your soul daily by applying Bible doctrine to your circumstances. Do all with the correct motivation, *"To Him be the glory"* (Eph 3:21).

As you advance in age you will experience cognitive decline. This is normal. This is also why it is critical you pack your soul with God's Word during your formative and adult years. Accumulate treasure in your soul while you are able and then you will be prepared for the challenging senior years.

A concern you may have is "What if I get dementia or Alzheimer's or have a stroke affecting my brain? Will it short-circuit my soul?"

Allow me to give you some Biblical rationales to use as you think about this. Never forget, God allows affliction in your life for a purpose, His purpose. *"Many plans are in a man's heart but it is the Lord's purpose that will prevail"* (Proverbs 19:21).

Maximize the opportunities He gives you.

Even when you are old, I will take care of you. Even when your hair turns gray I will support you. I made you and I will continue to care for you. I will support you and I will deliver you. (Isaiah 46:4)

God's Word, the Bible doctrine in the mentality of your soul, is alive and powerful and lasts forever. *"My Words will last forever"* (Matthew 24:35). There may come a time when you can't articulate it, yet it will comfort you and manifest to others in grace-enriching ways.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is continuous. *"The Holy Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to [or can't] pray as we should, the Holy Spirit Himself intercedes for us"* (Romans 8:26).

Contentment and happiness are grace resources and promised by God. *"When anxious thoughts multiply within me, Your comforts delight my soul"* (Psalm 94:19).

Fear and your spiritual life are incompatible. *"Do not fear what you are about to suffer ... Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10).

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.
(1 Thessalonians 5:23)

God's grace overcomes failing health and cognition. *"Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully"* (1 Cor 13:12).

The Christian life is not activity or productivity It is conductivity of God's Grace

The soul of the spiritually mature believer regardless of cognitive ability is a tremendous witness for Jesus Christ.

WIN SOULS FOR CHRIST

Your mission in this life is to be a soul winner. God intends the manifestation of your soul to be His witness.

He who is wise wins souls. (Proverbs 11:30)

God the Holy Spirit works through Christians to deliver souls from the Lake of Fire. Did you know that whenever you lead a person to the saving faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross there is a party? There is joy in heaven because you did your job!

There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents [changes his mind about Christ] then over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance. (Luke 15:7)

Your capacity to be a witness for Christ and win souls is based on the filling and the power of the Holy Spirit and the dynamics of God's Word in your soul.

You have two areas of responsibility in witnessing. One is the witness of your life. This is consistency in spiritual growth and standing firm in the faith. Those observing need to see the mind of Christ in you. The other is the witness of your lips. This is your personal evangelism responsibility to literally talk about Christ.

Jesus Christ is a magnet. You win souls by lifting Him up. Those with positive volition will be attracted to Him and pulled in by His truth.

**If I am lifted up
I will draw all men to Myself.
(John 12:32)**

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

My spiritual gift is evangelism. I have been presenting the gospel and talking about Jesus Christ since I was 22. That's many, many years. In addition to the principles listed in the WITNESS acrostic on the next page, let me give you a few other pointers:

- The manifestation of your soul is your testimony.
- You must have the desire to introduce our Lord to others and be properly motivated by the right mental attitude. Otherwise, don't witness.
- Don't go in half-cocked. Understand the gospel message. Be able to explain the saving work of Christ on the cross. Know relevant Scripture and use it.
- The appeal is Jesus Christ and His Word, not you.
- It's not a quota deal. Your witnessing experiences are between you and the Lord. Never brag.
- Be patient with those who don't respond favorably. A lost person is spiritually brain-dead. Only the Holy Spirit can overcome this barrier and get through to him.
- God's Word never comes back void.
- Personalize your approach. Be flexible.
- Emphasize God's grace. No works. Not earned. Salvation is God's grace gift to all.
- Don't think you can't do it. To start a conversation all you have to do is ask, "If you die today, will you go to heaven?" Then off you go based on how they respond.
- Make it a priority in your daily prayer life to ask God to make you aware of lost individuals and give you opportunities to be a witness for Him.
- 'Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.' So he went away, proclaiming what great things Jesus had done for him (Luke 8:39).
- Trust me, you will have no greater joy in this life than leading lost and dying people to Jesus Christ. Go forth!

You shall be My witnesses. (Acts 1:8)

W

What is a witness? A witness is a person who has experienced something and can attest to it. Your personal testimony of Christ's saving grace, His finished work on the cross for you and all mankind, is what to express.

I

Individual, informal, private conversations are the best. Respect free will and volition. Don't force a decision.

T

The issue is Jesus Christ. Use Him as your testimony. Don't get side-tracked with false issues such as personal sin, baptism, validity of the Bible, lifestyle, taboos or behavior. Don't debate or argue.

The Testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has eternal life. (1 John 5:11-13)

N

Never be ashamed or afraid to talk about Jesus Christ. Having a new life in Christ, a restart, and permanent membership in God's royal family will appeal to others.

E

Eternal security is the foundation for your confidence and peace of mind. Explain this.

S

Strength is in the Gospel. Accurately communicate it and then get out of God the Holy Spirit's way. His job is to do the convincing and the convicting.

S

Stability from spiritual growth is a witness.

Always be ready to give an account for the hope that is in you, with gentleness and reverence. (1 Peter 3:15)

Being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.
(2 Corinthians 3:3)

As a mature Christian, you are a living epistle to the world. Your spiritual life is characterized by a repetitious rhythm of your thoughts, speech and actions expressing the beauty and symmetry of God's plan and His policy of grace. Your life becomes a poem of God's grace. The real distinction of your spiritual life is its consistency, the result of having a stable soul. This will attract interest from those who observe you.

How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?
(Romans 10:14-15)

Who do you know that is not saved? ... Have you asked God to use you to talk to them? ... Are you praying for God the Holy Spirit to convince them they are lost and to convict them of their need to be saved?

Your mission is to win souls for Christ

Your soul is the you that goes to heaven and lives forever. I pray that this study gives you a greater understanding of your soul. Keep your soul focused on Jesus Christ. Focus on His thinking and the spiritual life He designed for you to live. Prioritize storing eternal treasure in your soul. If you do, you will benefit now and forever. Most importantly, you will have tremendous capacity for everlasting worship and glorification of God.

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GOD'S PROBLEM SOLVING DEVICES

REBOUND

FILLING OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT

FAITH-REST DRILL

GRACE
ORIENTATION

DOCTRINAL
ORIENTATION

PERSONAL SENSE
OF DESTINY

PERSONAL LOVE
FOR GOD

IMPERSONAL
LOVE FOR ALL
MANKIND

SHARING THE
HAPPINESS
OF GOD

OCCUPATION
WITH CHRIST

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There is no charge for any material from Berachah Church or R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries. Anyone who desires Bible teaching can receive our recordings or publications without obligation. God provides Bible doctrine. We wish to reflect His grace.

If you, or a loved one, are incarcerated
and want to study the Word of God contact:

PHILIPPI FREEDOM MINISTRY

PO Box 552
Chesterfield, Missouri 63006-0552
philippifreedomministry.org
314-435-2957

Philippi Freedom Ministry presents the Gospel message of Faith Alone in Christ Alone and teaches Basic Bible Doctrines to those who are incarcerated. The purpose of this ministry is to make doctrinal Bible teaching available without charge or obligation.



RICK HUGHES, founder and President of Rick Hughes Evangelistic Ministries, Inc., communicates clear and concise Biblical principles for hearers to choose to use in their lives. For over 50 years, Rick has presented the truth to thousands of students and spoken at hundreds of schools and churches. He authored several books and hosts a weekly radio broadcast and podcast, *The FLOT Line*, all available, for free, on his website, rickhughesministries.org.

A native of Birmingham, Alabama, Rick was raised in a modest, single-parent home. He distinguished himself through excellence in athletics being named to the High School All American football team and set state records in the shot put and discus. The University of Florida signed Rick to a full football scholarship, but his SAT scores were too low. Challenged by a coach to overcome this failure, Rick applied himself in the classroom as he had done on the field. He seized the challenge, got a second chance, entered the University of Alabama as a football player under the training of prestigious coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, and the team won a national championship that year. After just one successful year, however, Rick quit school and drifted down the *my way highway*. Rick emphasizes *bad decisions limit future options*, and *God gave you two ends: one to sit on and one to think with. Success in life depends on which end you use. Heads you win—tails you lose*. Many of Rick’s personal experiences help to vividly teach these principles.

Rick’s turning point came when he accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior, by faith alone in Christ alone. This is the most important decision in your life, also. Rick’s decision opened a new path, not of football, but one personally designed for him by God. Through the ministry of Berachah Church in Houston, Texas, and its pastors, R. B. Thieme, Jr. and now R. B. Thieme III, Rick learned principles and promises of God’s Word that directed him into a life of Christian ministry. Rick’s life is proof that when you leave your own agenda behind and walk into God’s plan, you can have fulfillment and happiness beyond your imagination. “For with God, nothing will be impossible” (Luke 1:37).

UNDERSTANDING YOUR SOUL

Your soul is the real you—and it lives forever. The mentality of your soul is where your motives and actions originate. You are what you think. This book will deepen your appreciation for the importance of keeping your soul focused on Jesus Christ—on His thinking and the spiritual life God designed for you. The true beauty of a mature spiritual life is its consistency, the result of a stable soul filled with God’s Word. Such stability will draw the attention of others.

Your mission is to win souls for Christ. “He who is wise wins souls” (Proverbs 11:30). Your capacity to be a witness for Jesus Christ depends on the filling and power of the Holy Spirit and the dynamics of God’s Word in your soul. God intends the manifestation of your soul to be His witness.