



How To
Become
A
Believer

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HOW TO BECOME A BELIEVER

BY

STEPHEN LAU

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THE INTRODUCTION

You are living in a world of infinite information distributed through multiple media. Unfortunately, some of the information can be biased, distorted, and misinterpreted. As a result, you may have become misinformed, and thus negatively affecting how you think and what you believe.

The purpose of this book is to separate the truths from the half-truths or the myths; that is, separating the sheep from the goats. Why is this important? Because “living in reality” holds the key to not only living as if everything is a miracle but also to surviving and thriving in a material world with too many attractions and distractions.

To do just that, you need clarity of thinking to give you the wisdom to discern the ultimate truths of everything in life. The truth of the matter is that knowledge and information may not necessarily make you wise or wiser. It is only *your* thinking mind that can reveal to you the ultimate truths of your life and living, making your life meaningful and worthy of living. Your thinking mind needs both human and spiritual wisdom to do the right thinking, to make the right decisions, and to take the right actions throughout your lifespan.

The main objective of this book is to help you get rid of your unbelief so that you may begin your own belief journey to become a true believer. This will forever change the rest of your life.

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ONE

THE SELF AND THE HELPER

Knowing Yourself

Who Are You?

To live a meaningful life, you need to KNOW yourself: who you are, or who you “think” you are. Nobody knows that, except yourself. To know yourself better, ask yourself the following questions:

- *Why* are you here?

You came into this world from your parents, or you were adopted. But that may not be the only reason *why* you are here. You’re here for a purpose: to become a believer.

- *Why* do you exist?

You exist because you were given the breath of life. You will continue to exist as long as that breath of life is not taken away from you. The Chinese believe that each individual is given a certain number of breaths at birth. That explains why the Chinese exercises, such as *Tai Chi* or *Qigong*, focus so much emphasis on prolonging the breaths to promote longevity. Remember, rodents have the shortest lifespan in the animal kingdom because they have the shortest breaths.

- *What* role are you going to play throughout your existence?

First and foremost, you have been given the *freedom of choice* to do whatever you want to do to survive and thrive throughout your existence. Your choice is determined by your subjective thinking mind, which perceives and processes all your life experiences through the five senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, smelling).

So, your role is to live according to what your mind tells you regarding

your wants and your desires, as well as your life choices and decisions based on them.

Getting Help

Who Is in Control?

No matter what you do and how you do it to get what you want and desire, there are many instances in which things do not happen the way you want them to be. That is, many things in your life are beyond your control. There may be times in your life when your mind might begin to think of the presence of a Higher-Being who could be your Helper of the many undesirable things happening around you. But you might also have easily dismissed that thought, thinking that you are *still* in control of your own life.

What Is the Ego-Self?

Throughout your life, you may have focused so much on yourself that you have become self-centered. The more you know yourself, the more you understand that you are *different* from others, and that you have an ego-self. With no exception, we *all* have an ego-self, and there is nothing wrong with that.

Yes, we are all *different* from each other. But your ego-self may become troublesome if you cannot accept others as who they are, and you always want to “inflate” your own ego-self to become better than others. Very often, in the process of inflating your ego, you create many “attachments” to define who you think you are or wish you were, as well as to separate yourself from others. Your attachments can come in different forms, such as a successful career, living in a multi-million dollar home, or driving an expensive car. To pursue or maintain those attachments, you may even resort to doing all the wrong things, such as pushing someone over while climbing your own ladder of success.

But why an inflated ego-self? It is because you want to “control” others so that you may have better control of your own life and destiny. Remember, control is power. With power, you may think that you can have the life you want.

With pride, you want to take control of everything happening in your life

through your control of others. On the other hand, with humility, you can seek the help of the Higher-Being to be your Helper.

So, the leading question is: Do you want the Helper or do you want to do everything on your own?

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TWO

THE IDENTITY OF THE HELPER

Who Is the Helper?

If you *are* a believer, God is your Helper in every aspect of your life.

Understandably, it is not easy to be a believer because you are living in a world in which unbelief is common and prevalent among many. Why? It is because, to many, God does not exist. Even if He does, His existence is no more than the existence of the sun, the earth, or the moon. God's existence does not change their lives.

Unbelief also comes from many human doubts and unanswered questions, including some of the following:

- *Who* created God?

God comes from nothing. God is a timeless uncreated Creator with eternal existence and no origin. God is a Creator who gets anything from nothing. Unfortunately, this

simple answer may remain inexplicable and incomprehensible to many with their own sustained unbelief.

- *Which* one is God?

In this contemporary world, there are many religions. But many do not involve God; they are simply a system of beliefs with moral codes and righteous human behaviors to enlighten the human mind with better understanding of the meaning of life in this secular world.

For example, Buddhism does not involve God. Buddha was not a god, but a prince. One day, he left the palace and witnessed human

miseries that completely transformed his life with the enlightenment that human desires being the sources of all human sufferings.

For example, Hinduism involves many different gods.

For example, Judaism believes in one true God who promised Abraham, who was then childless, that He would create for him a nation with millions of descendants. Over the centuries, as promised, God had overseen the nation with instructions and messages from His prophets. Although His people had disobeyed and rejected Him, God appeared before Moses and delivered them from slavery in Egypt. After centuries of wars and exiles, God finally gave His chosen people the nation of Israel.

Christianity believes in one true God—Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, who was born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus came into this world not only to preach through His teachings and miracles, but also to die on the Cross to give humans their eternal salvation. His resurrection was a testament to His deity and identity.

Mohammad, the founder of Islam, the second largest religion, claimed to be a prophet, but not God, who called people to worship him, rejecting idolatry, and polytheism. Muslims believe that Allah created the world in six days and sent prophets, such as Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, and lastly Muhammad, to call people to come to Allah and read Quran, the book of Islam.

- *Why* does God allow evils to happen in this world?

Humans are looking at everything from their own perspectives, while the eternal God has His own timeframe. But to many, the existence of evil and injustice only intensifies their unbelief.

The bottom line: If the one true God exists, you will be better off than a non-believer. If the one true God does not exist, you will still be better off than a non-believer. *Why?* It is because you have already become a *better* person doing all the righteous things. So, you will have nothing to lose whether the one true God exists or not exists.

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WHY BECOMING A BELIEVER

Unbelief may be present in those who do not want to seek the ultimate truth about anything, especially the presence of God. To them “seeing is believing” and so they just bury their heads in the sand, thinking that God is “not here for *me* to see”; so, “Why should *I* believe?”

Unbelief may be the mindset of those who often focus on the *now*. Accordingly, “life after death” or “eternal salvation” is irrelevant to them living only in the present moment and not in the future.

Unbelief may be natural to those who are currently struggling to survive or to make a living in the material world. The “self-focus mindset” only further accentuates their unbelief.

Unbelief may be the rational thinking of those who observe all the lies and the evildoings in the world, including those done by pastors, priests, and religious people. Injustice justifies their rational thinking of unbelief.

Unbelief may be the self-defensiveness of those who believe that they have done no evils throughout their lives. Their self-denial and self-justification often cherish and nourish their own unbelief.

Unbelief is, ironically, the result of having too many religions in the world, confusing some people and making them reject God altogether.

Despite all of the above, there are still reasons *why* you should become a believer. Being a believer, you are *born again*, and you have earned your *eternal salvation* in the world to come.

But what about in this present world?

Being a believer may help every aspect of your daily life and living—that is, helping you “living in reality.”

Living in Reality

What is “living in reality”? If “living in reality” can be summarized in just one word, that word is “accountability.”

Then, what is “accountability”?

“Accountability” is the responsibility of an individual for the thinking and the decision, as well as the action or the inaction, of that individual, regardless of the circumstances. The accountability can be mental, physical, and even spiritual.

A simple illustration

You were one of the last two persons at a bar. You were sitting close to each other. The person finished his drink and left the bar, leaving some cash for the bartender, who, at that moment, was away with your credit card. You grabbed the tip left on the table by the man who had just left, and then placed it toward you. The bartender returned with your credit card, looked at the money right in front of you, and said: “Thank you.”

Did you do anything *wrong*?

If you had intended *not* to give the bartender any tip anyway, what you did had *not* changed the scenario—the bartender would still have said: “Thank you” with or without *your* tip, and she would have received the same amount of tip.

What is important in that hypothetical illustration is the *accountability*.

The reality of one minor misbehavior with no accountability will often lead to

many more serious ones with no accountability.

The “no-accountability mindset”

In this world, many have developed their own “no accountability” mindset based on their own beliefs, their own justifications, and their own rationalizations. They simply have no accountability to the law and order, not to mention to God.

For example, the **laws** are made to be broken because some of the lawmakers themselves do not comply or even obey the law they have created. That explains the prevalence of crimes committed in society.

For example, the **police** are not to be obeyed, because the police are corrupt, and often racially biased.

For example, the **Church** is not to be trusted because there are so many sexual scandals among priests. So, pastors and priests are not to be trusted and accountable to.

For example, **God** is neither fair nor just: there is so much discrepancy between the abundant and the lack; between the good who suffer and the bad who prosper and are seemingly blessed. So, why should there be accountability to God?

The thinking mind: “I am not the only one with no accountability; I am just one of the *many*. So, what is *wrong* with that?”

Am illustration of accountability and no accountability

Jeffrey Dahmer was a cannibal and a serial killer in Ohio. He was notorious and widely reported in the media because he was a good-looking young man who had killed 17 young men, dismembered their bodies, and even ate parts of their bodies between 1978 and 1991.

Dahmer came from a family with many marriage problems, and his mother was even depressed and suicidal.

Soon after graduating from high school, Dahmer killed his first victim, who was a hitchhiker. With no accountability, Dahmer began his killing spree of strangers he met on the street. He lured them into his home, locked them up, abused and then killed them. Due to the fact, that he was not connected to all his victims, Dahmer could get away with murders until his last potential victim got away from his home and reported to the police.

When the police found the organs and remains of some of his victims in the freezer of his refrigerator, Dahmer then confessed to the police all the violent crimes he had previously committed to the 17 victims.

Dahmer admitted to reporters that he killed all his victims not because he hated them, but because he had experienced “no accountability” for all the evils and crimes he had committed.

Dahmer was finally convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole.

In prison, Dahmer received a Bible, and he began his sessions with a prison minister. He was then awakened to his own accountability to God. He wanted his baptism of forgiveness from God, but he was afraid that the minister would not baptize him because of his past evils, or that the prison would not let it happen due to his scandalous notoriety.

Even some Christians worldwide reacted negatively, with comments such as: “If Dahmer were in heaven, I wouldn’t like to go to heaven to meet him with Jesus.” Many such comments and reactions only attested to their judgments of his scandalous notoriety.

In 1992, Dahmer was eventually baptized in prison—a testament to what the Bible says about “Thou shalt not judge” as well as forgiveness and repentance.

Soon, Dahmer began to be attacked physically by inmates because of his infamous serial killing. Instead of seeking isolation and protection in prison, Dahmer was looking forward to his own anticipated death as his own “accountability to God” for all the evils that he had done in the past.

In 1994, Dahmer was beaten to death by two prison inmates while he was cleaning the prison bathroom.

Profound Understanding

A believer may have a profound understanding of what life is all about.

Man is inherently a “rational” being, always demanding an explanation for anything and everything in life. Being a believer may give you access to divine wisdom to understand what is unintelligible to many.

According to **St. Augustine**, the Bishop of Hippo (354-430 A.D.), in life there are certain things we do not believe unless we *understand* them, and there are also other things that we do not understand unless we *believe* them *first*. Accordingly, faith is not opposed to understanding, nor is it independent of understanding. St. Augustine’s famous statement “faith seeking understanding” is an act of believing *first*, without which unbelief closes the door to *further* understanding. In other words, you must always believe *first*, and your understanding will then follow. It is just that simple.

St. Anselm of Canterbury, a well-known Christian philosopher and theologian of the eleventh century, also echoed St. Augustine’s statement in his famous motto: “I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand.”

So, you must *believe first* so that you may *see* and *understand* your belief, which is your *faith* in God.

But *knowing* about faith and *having* faith are not quite the same. Finding and having faith requires *transformation*, which is changing from the inside out.

Understandably, any “physical” change in an individual, such as change in the body’s shape, is not easy. The “transformation” of the mind and the soul of an individual is even much more challenging and difficult because in the process of transformation everything is *invisible* to the naked eye.

In addition, faith and actions must go together, such as sharing faith with others. Actions in anything often generate uncertainty that may result in doubt and fear. Given that most humans prefer to stay in their comfort zones, fear related to faith may be the stumbling block. But *your* fear, paradoxically, may also show how strong your faith is.

So, stop avoiding your own battles against your unbelief. Stop retreating and start fighting, and you will be the victor and the winner in the end.

“By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” (**Hebrews** 11:3)

The reality is that man has only limited power of understanding. Therefore, let go of any pre-conceived concept or rationalization to appreciate the presence of God, thereby opening the door to *further* understanding the mysteries of His creation and presence.

Clear Thinking

With profound understanding, you may also have clarity of thinking to perceive some of the paradoxes of life, including the following:

First of all, what is a paradox? A paradox is a statement with two totally opposite meanings that may seem contradictory to each other and yet together they not only are true but also make some sense.

- *The paradox of believing in God:* The Creator becomes a creature; the Infinite becomes finite; the Eternal One enters time; and death is the way to life. These are some of the paradoxes of Jesus becoming a human expressed in the Bible.

The presence of God is one of the many paradoxes of life. Indeed, sometimes we see God's love, mercy, and justice, but there are also times we see only His indifference, condemnation, and even injustice. In fact, there are many times we are prone to asking the pivotal question: "*Where is God?*"

So, how do we explain this enigma and the paradox of God's presence in humans' lives? But the spiritual wisdom may provide some explanation to the many paradoxes in God.

- *The paradox of two-in-one person:* You are a two-in-one person. As a matter of fact, we *all* are, to a certain extent.

There are two persons living inside you: one is your ego-self; the other is your spirit. They co-exist: your ego-self is living in the physical or material world, while your spirit is living in your soul, a totally different environment with a different dimension. There is constant and continual contact and interaction between these two personalities. Your ego-self is assertive, and even aggressive, always telling you that you are separate from everyone else. Your ego-self wants more of everything in life, not only to define who you are but also to separate you from others.

Your ego-self is judgmental, not only self-evaluating but also assessing others through comparison and contrast with yourself. Your ego-self is constantly shifting and shuffling back and forth between the past and the future, instrumental in improving the ego-self in the past, as well as in enhancing the ego-self expected in the future.

Your spirit is the other person living inside you. Your spirit, on the other hand, is gentle and submissive in nature, always nudging you to do what is right and to avoid doing what is wrong.

The paradox is that both your ego-self and your spirit co-exist, and that each strives to dominate and influence the other. The classic illustration of the two-in-one person is **Robert Louis Stevenson's** famous story of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." In the story, both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde have a dark side within them, where evil is always lurking underneath to surface anytime. In the end, it turns out that Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are actually "one and the same person."

Given that the ego-self and the spirit co-exist, and that one can never *totally* get rid of the other, the reality is that the more control the ego-self has over the spirit, the more difficult it is to understand God's presence, not to mention to attain and appreciate His spiritual wisdom. So, you need to become a believer to seek God's help to unravel the paradox of two-in-one person.

- *The paradox of moralism*: Moralism is a paradox about right and wrong in contemporary living.

To many, it has a somewhat close association with religion or the word "God." Moralism, to a certain extent, has much to do with *how* an individual is brought up to believe, as well as *what* that individual has perceived and experienced throughout that individual's life. The truth of the matter is that moralism may make people reject not just the behavior but also the very person engaging in that behavior. That is, moralism may make people's actions and reactions become conditional, judgmental, and even condemning. **Pope Francis** has rightly said: "Who am I to judge?"

The paradox is that moralism is a two-way street: people look at others from their own perspectives, while others may also look at them from totally different perspectives too. Moralism can drive people *away* from God because they cannot or are unwilling to change their own behaviors, and thus they somehow feel rejected by God. Moralism can also make people become *inactive* in their religious life because they believe that they can be "moral" even outside of the church. Moralism, an important aspect of most religions, can, ironically enough, deprive people of the presence of God.

- *The paradox of good and evil*: There is no deny that good and evil exist side by side.

Then, is the nature of man inherently good or bad?

This is one of the most controversial questions that does not have a definitive answer. There are those who believe that man is created in God's image to serve Him; if that is truly the case, then man is inherently good. There are, on the other hand, those who believe that

man is inherently bad because of the original sin of Adam and Eve.

According to **Hsun Tzu** (荀子), a Confucian Chinese philosopher who lived approximately between 310-219 B.C., the nature of man is evil, and his goodness is the result of his right actions and activities. Hsun Tzu's explanation was that man's innate nature is to seek gain, which is often followed by strife and rapacity that may annihilate his deference and compliance to goodness; man's envy and hatred of others may also obliterate his loyalty and faithfulness; and man's desire to gratify his five senses may engender his own lewdness and licentiousness. That is *how* man may have become bad and even evil over the long haul.

According to many Western philosophers, man from the outset is originally evil. For example, **Thomas Hobbes**, a sixteenth century English philosopher, believed that the life of man in his natural state is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." For example, **Sigmund Freud**, the world-famous Austrian neurologist and founding father of psychoanalysis, also believed that man is innately evil and aggressive as demonstrated by the fact that man is violent on criminals; but that in a civilized society, the law is unable to prosecute the more subtle and smaller aggression of man, which can sometimes be just as evil as those violent criminals.

Essentially, good and evil are only moral concepts that have co-existed since the beginning of time. Humans have been categorizing different actions and feelings based on their own philosophical concepts. Good and evil are closely linked together, just like the concept of the *yin* and the *yang*; one cannot exist without the other, but they balance and complement each other.

Clear thinking may reveal to a believer some of the ultimate truths in the many paradoxes of life, and thus enabling the believer to live in reality.

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FOUR

YOUR BELIEF JOURNEY

Your belief journey is long and winding, with many detours and sidetracks that may distract and even prevent you from reaching your destination.

No matter what, it is important to take your first step—just as **Lao Tzu**, the ancient sage from China, once said: “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.”

So, take your *first* step to begin your belief journey. This will change your life forever.

The Preparation

Before any journey, you need to prepare yourself physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Your preparation determines how far you may go on your belief journey and what stumbling blocks you may encounter on the way.

(1) The Intent to Believe

Belief seldom begins with going to a church or reading the Bible.

Belief always begins with the mind of an individual to believe the unbelievable.

An empty mind

To believe, you must have an empty mind with no pre-conceived ideas about God. If need be, ask yourself *how* and *why* you might have those ideas in the first place (what is known as *reverse thinking*). An empty mindset originated from Lao Tzu:

“An empty mind with no craving and no expectation helps us let go.

Being in the world and not of the world, we attain heavenly grace.
With heavenly grace, we become pure and selfless.
And everything settles into its own perfect place.”
(Lao Tzu, ***Tao Te Ching***, Chapter 3)

There was the story of a professor visiting a Zen master to find out more about Zen, which is an Eastern philosophy. In the beginning of the visit, the professor kept on talking nonstop while the Zen master served him tea. At some point, the Zen master kept pouring tea into the teacup held by the professor even though it was already brimming over. The moral of the story is that you must have an empty mind *first* before you can accept any new and unconventional ideas.

Likewise, you cannot come to God with ideas about what you want God to do for you. So, surrender yourself with an empty mindset before coming to Him.

Humility

God is above, and we are below. To believe, you must come to God with humility, and not pride.

Humility is the opposite of pride, which is the first of the Seven Deadly Sins. Pride comes from the ego, which, unfortunately, we all have.

Yes, with no exception, we *all* feel proud of ourselves at some points in our lives: being a mother; seeing the grandchild stand up and start walking; graduating from school or college; joining the army and serving the country; finding a profitable profession; getting married in a church; retiring from work after decades of hard work and accomplishment; and so on. But pride often leads to sins.

An Illustration

“The College Admission Cheating Scandal”

On March 12, 2019, the United States federal prosecutors disclosed an ongoing conspiracy aimed at influencing some students’ college admission decisions at several prominent American colleges and universities.

In the college admission cheating scandal, some wealthy parents paid as much as \$75,000 per test to help their children get a better score. It was reported that at least 50 people, including some famous Hollywood stars, allegedly had participated in that scandal.

Apparently, these parents with “good intention” to help their children’s education had committed “a crime with no victim.” But it was all about selfishness, self-centeredness, and pride to satisfy the ego that their children could go to those prominent colleges and universities.

The antidote to pride is humility, which opens the door to God.

An Illustration

Ann Russell Miller was a celebrated socialite from San Francisco, also known as **Sister Mary Joseph**. She, who had ten children and nineteen grandchildren, had been living a life of incredible wealth and luxury that she had been so proud of for years. Instead of shopping at Saks Fifth Avenue as she used to do for the past several decades, she suddenly decided to give up anything and everything to become a nun devoted to living in poverty for the rest of her life.

That unbelievable event happened more than two decades ago: one day, she held a celebrity party in which she announced her incredible decision, and her announcement was widely reported over the United States.

Why did Ann Russell make such an incredible decision to drastically change her lifestyle?

She was letting go of all her attachments to the material world. She said she had a calling from God that was difficult for the world to understand, and even for the close members of her family.

Humility is living in simplicity with an empty mind without any pre-conditioned thinking and expectation. But only with humility, will you be filled with God’s grace and wisdom.

Becoming and transforming

Humility opens the door to God, who never changes Himself, but who forever

changes those coming to Him.

At some point in your life, you may begin to sense your incompleteness, your loneliness, your limitations, your disillusionments with human vanity, and you may then begin to turn to God to truly fill and satisfy your inner longing. Yes, your past wayward pursuits in life were all in vain—much like “chasing the wind.” (**Ecclesiastes 2:11**)

Now, your belief becomes your becoming, which is self-transformative.

Change is external, and transformation is internal. Change requires you to look outside of you; transformation is looking inside of you. Change may have a negative impact in that you want to get rid of something undesirable; transformation is *enhancing* something which is good and which is already innate in you. Transformation is the *rediscovery* of what is already there inside you, but might have become invisible to your naked eye, imperceptible to your mind, and unintelligible to your soul.

The miracle of becoming and transforming is to provide you with new perceptions of your *true self*—that is, who you really are in the eyes of God, and not who you wish you were.

(2) The Consciousness to Believe

Belief is *not* about “seeing is believing” or “seeing is understanding.”

Belief is about consciousness, which is *everything* in your life: if you are not conscious, you are not living your life, if not already dead.

So, what exactly is consciousness?

Being conscious is a "special quality of the mind" that permits us to *know* both that we exist and that the people and the things around us *also* exist. Consciousness is self-awareness of what is happening around us. We are living in a world of information overload that distracts ourselves not only from turning to God but also from looking truthfully at ourselves.

Life is an inner journey that often requires consciousness of the body and of the mind, together with that of the soul or spirit, to continue making its progress to reach its destination. Sadly, since the beginning of time, many

have traveled on their life journey but without reaching their destination because they simply lack their consciousness of the body and of the mind, not to mention that of the soul or spirit, to guide them along the long and winding journey with its many detours and sidetracks.

Hippocrates (460 - 370 B.C.), the father of modern medicine, was one of the first scientists to observe and notice that consciousness came from the mind, created by the brain, and that people with brain damage tended to lose their mental capabilities. According to Hippocrates, the human mind is created by the brain, and the mind crumbles piece by piece as the brain dies.

The human brain creates the consciousness of the mind, and thus giving all humans their pleasures and displeasures, their happiness and unhappiness, as well as other positive and negative feelings and emotions. These human perceptions become their subjective experiences which are stored in their minds as memories generating their subsequent thoughts—together they then become the byproducts with which they weave the fabrics of the realities in their lives.

Without your consciousness, you may just obediently follow whatever your mind tells you to do, without seeing *how* and *why* you want to do it. In other words, you may have become a slave to your thinking mind, instead of being the master of your own thoughts.

It is through your consciousness that you may gain access to God's wisdom. Without that channel of connection, you may knowingly or unknowingly distance, if not separate, yourself from God. So, consciousness is your channel of communication not only with your true self but also with God.

Consciousness of breaths

Now, ask yourself one simple question: Are you always conscious of your breaths—that is, breathing in and breathing out? If not, most probably, you are always watching TV while cooking or eating, or you are always talking on the phone while doing your daily walk.

You are conscious of your mind only if you are always conscious of your breathing and your breaths. The truth of the matter is that life is made up of many breaths. For thousands of years, the Chinese have believed that the lifespan of an individual is determined by the number of breaths assigned to

that individual at birth. That explains why traditional Chinese exercises, such as *Qi Gong* and *Tai Chi*, focus so much on the art of breathing, especially on extending the breaths, which holds the key to longevity. Western science has already attested to the fact that tortoise, with the longest lifespan in the animal kingdom, has the longest breaths, while rodent, with the shortest lifespan, has the shortest breaths. So, consciousness of your breaths is also a reflection of your own consciousness of life, as well as of many other things happening in your life.

Even the Bible has made reference to the importance of the breath from God, which is not only life itself but also *divine understanding*.

“And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and then breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” (**Genesis 2:7**)

Without the wisdom of consciousness, it is difficult to understand *why* you should turn to God.

Life passions and life goals

Consciousness is “quieting” the mind to find out *who* you really are, and not who you wish you were. In other words, what are your wants and desires, and what do you want out of your life? Consciousness makes you know and understand yourself, including your life passions and life goals.

“Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom.” **Aristotle**

Be conscious of your life passions and your life goals. Life passions are what you desire and enjoy doing in your life, such as playing music, writing poetry, participating in a sport—or what God has destined for you. Life goals, on the other hand, are what you want to do to make a living, and to live comfortably in this world.

If you are young, you may desire a successful career, having a good love relationship, or making lots of money. Now, with consciousness, honestly and sincerely ask God to reveal to you the life goals and the life purpose He has destined for you, and not according to what you desire and want.

If you are old, you may desire health and a life of no suffering. Now, with

humility, ask God to show you what He has destined for the rest of your life.

So, ask God to find your true calling: “Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” (**Psalm 37:4**)

Yes, consciousness with humility will enable you to see God’s destiny for you—irrespective of who and where you are right now—and your re-discovery of your true self will stop you from comparing yourself with others.

An Illustration

There was an ancient Chinese fable of a stonecutter who was always distressed by his daily work of cutting stones behind a huge stone.

One day, he looked up at the sky and wished he were the sun that could give warmth to others. A fairy came and granted him his wish, and he became the sun. For a while, he was happy, looking down at the world below. Then, one day, a big cloud came over and blocked everything from his view. Now, he wished he were the cloud that could drift everywhere in the sky.

The fairy granted him his wish, and he became the cloud, instead of the sun. For a while, he was drifting happily in the sky until one day a strong wind came, and he was scattered in different directions. Then, he wished he were the invisible wind blowing anywhere as he wished. Again, the fairy granted him his wish, and he became the wind.

One day, he found himself stuck in front of a big stone that he could not blow away. Surprisingly, that big stone was where he used to work as a stonecutter. Now, he finally realized that was where he was supposed to work. So, he asked the fairy to transform him into the stonecutter again.

The moral of the fable: You are who you are, and what you are destined to be. So, stop comparing yourself with others, or comparing your current self with your past self.

The bottom line: Like the stonecutter, be your true self, and do not compare yourself with others. Consciousness of your true self enables you to develop your spiritual connection with God, who always accepts you for who you are despite your imperfections because He created you to be who are meant to become.

(3) The Imperfections to Believe

But consciousness of imperfections may have a negative impact on some individuals who are vulnerable to low self-esteem and self-doubt.

So, the remedy is self-acceptance, which is self-love. It should be noted that “loving yourself” and “loving your ego-self” are not quite the same. The former is loving and accepting yourself for who you are; the latter is loving or craving to be the person you wish you were. “Loving yourself” means you can also love others because they are not different from you in that they, too, are as “imperfect” as you are. On the other hand, “loving your ego-self” means others must somehow satisfy your ego *first* before you can love them.

The bottom line: If you cannot love and accept yourself, it is even more difficult to love and accept others.

Yes, “love” is a big word in all human civilizations and religions. God loves us because we are all imperfect and incomplete. So, your recognition and acknowledgment of your own imperfections is your only pathway to your belief.

(4) The Connectedness to Believe

Nowadays, living well is not easy. Contemporary wisdom may provide you with a blueprint for living, but it is often too “exclusive”—even to the extent of wishing others fail so that one may succeed in life. In addition, it often states that one must do this or do that to oneself to succeed and live well. It is not uncommon for many even to push over someone while climbing their own ladder of success.

Now, your belief may begin to reveal to you the wisdom in the connectedness of all life, which is based on one of the basic laws of Nature that all humans are somehow inter-connected with one another.

The famous English poet **John Donne** said: "No man is an island." This universal moral principle of the oneness of all life leads us to true and lasting freedom and wisdom in living. Once we understand that the life flowing in our veins is the same as that flowing in the veins of others, we will then learn *how* to show love and compassion toward others. After all, we are all created

in the image of God, and we are no more than an expression of God's creation.

The wisdom in the oneness of all life may free you from the human bondage of anger, competitiveness, disrespect, discrimination, envy, and other negative feelings and emotions. The inter-connectedness of all humans must be understood in subtle ways. For example, even if you just "kill" the enthusiasm of someone, you are also "harming" that individual because you are in fact taking away the life within that individual.

Empathy and sympathy

Love intensifies with the recognition of connectedness to others. With intensity through belief, it may develop into your empathy and sympathy.

Empathy is more than just sympathy. It is a deep understanding of the painful experiences of another individual that are as meaningful as those of your own, because either you have actually experienced them yourself or you can somehow realistically put yourself in that individual's shoes.

Sympathy, on the other hand, is just an acknowledgment of the painful experiences of another individual with your own offer of comfort and assurance.

Empathy is initial human goodness that must be cultivated and developed before it can be easily expressed. Your belief can do the job for you.

An Illustration

There was a Jewish story of a man who died and was shown two images in both heaven and hell, in which people were sitting at both sides of a long table with a meal before each of them. He noticed that the people in hell were starving, because each of them had a spoon that was much too long to fit into his or her own mouth. However, the people in heaven were well fed because each was using the same long spoon to feed the person *across* the table.

Compassion and loving-kindness

Compassion means “suffering together.” It is an emotion or a feeling that when you see an individual suffering, you feel motivated to relieve the suffering of that individual by any means.

Loving-kindness is an act of kindness motivated by love and expressed in behavior toward another individual. Develop the mindset for love and care toward others around you so that loving-kindness becomes a habit or second nature to you.

When a person is not nice to you, what would be your immediate response and reaction to that person? Maybe your mind may tell you: “I won't let him or her step over me like that!” Over time, your natural response will become habitual and spontaneous—a natural way of expressing your individuality and your own rights. In other words, it has become your mindset.

Showing loving-kindness is not about “an eye for an eye,” or about your “rights” as an individual. Loving-kindness is an act of love that you *consciously* express to another individual simply because that individual has the same desire to be happy and to avoid suffering, just like yourself. Accordingly, your response is an expression of your love for that individual, irrespective of the behavior of that individual toward you. However, that does not imply that you accept, approve, or even condone the inappropriate behavior of that individual. Loving-kindness is a response in your attempt to *change* the inappropriate behavior of that individual. The outcome of your attempt to change that individual, however, does not affect your own response, because the attempt is out of your compassion and love for that individual, irrespective of your success or failure in *changing* the inappropriate behavior of that individual.

Loving-kindness is tantamount to what Jesus said about “loving your neighbor” and “turning the other cheek.”

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” (**Matthew 5: 43-45**)

“But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on

the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.” (**Matthew 5: 39**)

With awareness of the co-existence of others, you can now develop a positive mentality toward not only yourself but also others—which can improve human relationships by expressing your compassion and loving-kindness.

Forgiveness and forgetting

When you are unable to forgive others for the wrongs that they have done to you, you carry those negative feelings in your bag and baggage with you wherever you go, and thus distancing and separating yourself not only from them but also from God.

The reality is that you can never control what people may say or do to you; even avoiding those individuals does not necessarily eradicate your mental stress caused by the memories in that emotional bag and baggage you have been carrying with you.

An Illustration

On September 24, 2016, runner and cyclist **Dean Otto** was struck by a car driven by **Will Huffman**, a 27-year-old salesman, with his buddy on their way to a football game. The crash left Dean Otto paralyzed with his broken vertebrae, broken tailbone, a broken right leg, and several broken ribs.

After assessing Otto’s condition, **Dr. Matt McGirt** told the Otto family that Dean Otto was 99 percent likely going to spend the rest of his days in a wheelchair. It was sad and scary news for the Otto family.

But Otto was never scared—or even resentful. Instead, he said a private prayer and instantly forgave Will Huffman. “I knew if I didn’t, the resentment would eat me alive.”

After the surgery on his spine performed by Dr. Matt McGirt, Otto began his miraculous recovery. As a matter of fact, a few hours after the surgery, Otto was able to wiggle his toes.

Through *Facebook*, Will Huffman and his wife were finally able to contact

Otto's family, who welcomed them graciously with open arms.

Huffman was not surprised that Otto would forgive him, but he did not expect or imagine that they would become good friends afterwards. Huffman even said: "I think most people would stop there and say, 'Nice meeting you, but I'm done.'"

Dr. Matt McGirt was also inspired by their close friendship, and he earnestly believed that it was Otto's attitude, forgiveness, and loving-kindness that had brought about his phenomenal recovery. The doctor also remarked: "He not only turned lemons into lemonade, but he's selling that lemonade, too." Yes, Otto raised \$11,000 for Carolinas Rehabilitation's LIFE Program for spinal cord injury patients.

On July 22, 2017, Otto, Huffman, and Dr. McGirt reunited and participated in a half-marathon race. Their reunion was widely reported in the news.

The bottom line: Always forgive with no judgment, and you, too, will be forgiven. Forgiveness is a powerful spiritual medicine that cures all negative emotions and feelings about yourself and others.

So, let your belief free yourself from that bondage of unforgiving and unforgetting.

Generosity and gratitude

Love of others should be expressed in generosity. Be generous with your time, your labor, and with what you have. Show generosity to others around you. Form the habit of giving without expecting any credit, recognition, or just anything in return for your generous gesture. If you give with the intent of receiving, you are a "user" and not a *real* "giver."

Generosity does not necessarily involve spending your money. It is not solely based on your economic status or how much money you have, but on your pure intention of looking out for society's common good and giving from the bottom of your heart. Generosity should reflect your passion to help others who are in need, or who are less fortunate than yourself.

Giving generously is spiritual giving because God is forever giving:

“And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.” (**Acts** 17:25)

God constantly sustains man by giving His providential gifts:

“He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.” (**Acts** 14:17)

God gave His beloved Son so that man may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (**John**. 3:16)

So, your generosity should be an expression of the contentment of what you already have. You do not give simply because you have more. Your generosity comes only from your heart. Your generosity will change your perceptions of life, especially with respect to letting go of all attachments in this material world. Your generosity is a necessity, and not an impossibility, in seeking God’s spiritual inspiration.

“‘Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,’ says the Lord Almighty.” (**Malachi** 3: 10-11)

Your generosity is also an expression of your gratitude—grateful for what you already have, and not for getting what you rightly deserve. So, your gratitude is your appreciation of what God has given and provided you. Without gratitude, you tend to focus on your lack, and thus generating your craving for more.

An Illustration

At the end of 2007, **John Kralik**, an attorney who owned a law firm, experienced debts and disasters in both his life and his career.

One day, after a walk in the mountains, Kralik became enlightened: As his 2008 New Year's resolution, he decided to write a "thank-you note" a day for the rest of the year to everyone he knew.

Kralik's 2008 "gratitude project" had changed his life completely. Instead of his feeling of discontent regarding his lack, and his envy of those who had what he did not have, he had learned to be *grateful* for his law firm, his practice, his friends, and his family, despite the many disasters and drawbacks he had previously experienced. Kralik's gratitude began to change every aspect of his life. His relationships with his family, his friends, and his staff improved significantly; his law firm avoided bankruptcy and turned around completely.

The bottom line: Gratitude is something that you get more only by giving away more. Your expression of gratitude may help you overcome the feeling of lack. So, let your belief in gratitude get you closer to God.

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The Compass

To go on your belief journey, you need a compass to tell you *where* you are right now.

The Bible to Believe

The Bible is the compass to believe. You can always go to the Bible to ask for guidance and divine instructions to tell you where you are and which direction to go.

What is the Bible?

The Bible is the Word of God. Through the Bible, God speaks to every one of us *if* we are willing to believe and listen. In other words, the wisdom expressed in the Bible is God's divine instructions to man.

The Word of God is not just for the Israelites, but for *all* believers and non-

believers.

Why?

It is because the Word of God expresses the absolute truths of living in reality, which is making the most out of life, as well as avoiding any disorder and disharmony in life that may bring about premature death. To meet this tall order, human wisdom is often inadequate and incomplete. Biblical wisdom, expressed in God's Word, may show humans *how* to live life to the best and the fullest, as well as how to conquer death, which inevitably comes as the end.

Is the Bible only for believers?

Before answering the question, you must ask yourself this question first: Does God *really* exist?

Many do believe that God exists—but His existence has little to do with their daily lives on earth. Few believe that they can somehow communicate with God to make their dreams come true, such as giving them abundance or making them happy in their lives.

For a true believer, the Bible is the source of inexplicable communication and subtle relationship with God.

To go on your belief journey, you need a *compass* to show you where to go, and the Word of God is your compass to give you directions and instructions.

What is the authenticity of biblical truths?

According to *Guinness Book of Records*, the Bible is the all-time best-selling book, as well as the most translated work in world literature. This indicates that many people do believe that the Bible is a book of absolute truths with divine instructions from God.

Indeed, the Bible is a book of wisdom based on biblical truths that require *faith* to believe in the authenticity of all historical manuscripts reporting those events that had *already* taken place.

An Illustration

In the Bible, it was reported that Jesus “walked on water” (**Matthew** 14:22-33). Some may argue that the miracle was observed by only a few and they could be “delusional”; without faith, unbelievers may even doubt the authenticity of that miracle reported in the Bible.

There was another more contemporary miracle: “The Miracle of the Sun” that occurred on Oct 13, 1917. The Virgin Mary began to appear as early as in May 1917 to three young shepherd children in the town of Fatima in Portugal. Her repeated apparitions began to attract crowds going up the hill with the three children, although only the oldest one saw and spoke to the Virgin Mary.

As the crowds continued to increase with many skeptics, the Virgin Mary told the children that she would appear one last time on Oct 13, 1917. As many as 70,000 turned up. The Virgin Mary said that World War I would end soon and she predicted that another World War would be forthcoming because of the evils of man. She ended her apparition with “the Sun spinning in the sky and heading toward the Earth.” The miracle was witnessed by tens of thousands, including reporters who took pictures of the miracle.

The bottom line: You need *faith* to believe in the veracity and the authenticity of a miracle, irrespective whether it was witnessed by a few or by many.

How many books are there in the Bible?

According to Protestants, there are 66 books, and 77 books according to Catholics; and 27 of them are in the New Testament. These books or manuscripts are about the ancient prophets, the history of the Israelites, the salvation of mankind, the growth of the early church, and the spread of the Gospel.

All these books in the Bible contain the instructions to live rightly and righteously to please God.

How to read the Bible?

To begin reading the Bible may be a daunting task for many; they simply do not know *where* to begin. Reading the Bible does not need to follow a certain order or blueprint. All you need to know is what to look for and let God’s Spirit

guide you along the way.

The Old Testament is about the Law of God, the History and the Prophets, the ancient Poetry of Wisdom.

The Genesis tells the departure of Adam and Eve from God's way to go on their own way, leading to sins and evils of humans. It also tells how God uses Abraham to begin saving His chosen People.

The Proverbs give you words of wisdom from God.

The New Testament is about the coming of Jesus Christ and His salvation.

The Gospel of Luke gives a thorough and orderly account of Jesus Christ.

The Acts provides the history of early church.

The Ephesians is Paul's letters, giving his own perspectives of Jesus, to the churches.

The Revelation is a prophetic book revealing Jesus' leadership and His Second Coming.

Remember, the Bible is not meant to be read at a certain order. Just, begin reading it, and you will become enlightened regarding where to go next.

What are the biblical life instructions?

Some of the biblical life instructions are specifically for *all* believers—they teach them how to pray, how to form a good relationship with God through trust and obedience to His will.

“Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (**Matthew 22: 37-40**)

But many of the biblical life instructions are also for *unbelievers* because they simply teach all and sundry—irrespective of their faith or belief—what is right

and wrong, what are sins and what are virtues in their daily lives. That is, these instructions correct them when they are wrong and teach them to do what is right and righteous. Given that all these instructions are inspired by God, all major and significant life areas are addressed in the Bible as God knows that they all need His instructions or guidelines on how-to living in a world of fancy and fantasy.

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The Roadmap

On your belief journey, a compass only tells you where you are right now; you also need a roadmap to tell you *where* to go next.

(1) The Word of God

Jesus said: “Your word is truth.” (**John** 17:17) Yes, God’s Word is everything in human life. Because God’s Word is the truth, it never changes; it is always true.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (**Matthew** 24:25)

Through His Word, we know who God is. Through His Word, we know about the creation and fall of man due to the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Through His Word, we know we all have sinned. Through His Word, we know we are living in a world of sins and evils, making it difficult not only to live but also to survive in it without God’s help and guidance.

Yes, only the gift of God to believe in His Word can help us jump out of the dark well of sins and evils.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (**Romans** 6:23)

To receive that gift of God is the only solution to all human problems.

“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (**Matthew** 4:17)

God made His Son die for our sins on the Cross that we may live without

being haunted by our sins.

“For He made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (**2 Corinthians 5:21**)

Through His Word, God has delivered us from His wrath to come by providing an opportunity for us to be born again and to receive a new life not living in sin.

“Jesus said: ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” (**John 14:6**)

Given that Jesus is the door (**John 10:9**), open that door and step inside to be transformed and to be born again.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)

(2) The Presence of God

Let the Word of God be present in your daily life so that He can be present in your heart.

To maintain and sustain the presence of God, *meditate* on His Word, and *memorize* some of them so that you can easily recall and remember them at any time in your life when you need His help and advice.

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” (**Psalms 119: 105**)

“The LORD is My Shepherd” (**Psalms 23**) is one of the most important and widely read passages in the Bible. If you are now a believer, maybe you should memorize it by heart. Let the Shepherd guide you along the rest of your belief journey.

“The LORD is My Shepherd”

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths
For his name sake.
Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.” (**Psalm 23**)

Several decades ago, a former colleague of mine had the opportunity to meet and dine with **Gladys Aylward**, a British missionary to China, whose amazing story was made into a Hollywood film in 1958: “The Inn of the Sixth Happiness”, starring **Ingrid Bergman**.

My former colleague told me that at the dinner with Gladys, she found it very “odd” that Gladys had repeated almost non-stop “Praise the Lord!” throughout the dinner—when someone passed her a dish, some bread, even salt and pepper, or when someone made a positive comment on something. Evidently, Gladys was self-strengthening and self-reinforcing God’s presence in her heart on any occasion. It might not have looked “odd” to someone who would like to *feel* the presence of God in *every* moment of his or her life.

So, from now on, whenever you say: “Thank you” aloud, maybe you should also try to say in silence: “Praise the Lord!” so that you may *feel* God’s presence in your heart.

To feel God's omnipresence, you must every now and then still your thoughts with *mindfulness*, and *live in the now* to let God speak to you.

(3) The Trust and the Obedience

If you truly believe in God and His presence, then you must trust and obey Him. Trusting and obeying God is *action*, which always speaks louder than words. But the action to trust and obey God is never easy because we are humans with many human flaws and shortcomings innate in us. For example, we want to *control* the happenings in our lives, and we think we have the right to *choose* whatever we want to do.

Control

We are all controlling to a certain extent because we all have an ego. We want to control people around us, such as our spouses, our parents, our children, and the people around us.

An Illustration

Several years ago, a pastor from Hong Kong was invited to give a sermon in China.

A woman from the congregation asked the pastor if it was "right" to give money to get her son into an elite school in China. The pastor replied by saying: "Your son getting into that elite school would also imply depriving another child of that same opportunity you're seeking for your child."

A year later, the pastor met the same woman, who told him that her son had got into that elite school but without using her *kwangxi* or financial connection. The pastor then said to her: "See, God is in control; if you'd just let Him."

A question for reflection: Is buying the lottery your disobedience to God?

An Illustration

According to CNN news, near the end of December 2018, the nurses and staff of the neonatal intensive care unit at Mercy Children's Hospital at St.

Louis, won \$10,000 in the Mega Millions lottery—entering the lottery is what they have been doing for years to overcome their stress from their daily work.

Instead of dividing up the winnings among their group, they decided to give the money to two colleagues going through some tough times: one whose son committed suicide the night before the lottery drawing; the other whose husband was battling with terminal cancer.

Here are some more questions about the lottery for your self-reflection:

- Why do people line up for hours to get their Power Ball? Their heart is on their *greed*.
- Can their anticipated winnings solve all their financial problems? Probably yes, but they may also be instrumental in creating many other problems in their lives as a result of their winnings.
- What if it is God who wants them to win the lottery? Well, in the first place, God did not create the Power Ball; it is only the individual's own choice and decision to go and get the lottery ticket. It has nothing to do with God; it has everything to do with human *greed* and *vanity*.
- What if people would like to turn their winnings into a good cause to help others—such as the nurses and staff of Mercy Children's Hospital at St. Louis? If people were to win millions, instead of just \$10,000, would they still have given away 100 percent of their winnings to charity or to help others? Well, probably not!

Buying a lottery ticket is one of the many attachments to money and wealth. You may want to keep up with the Joneses by driving a more expensive car than those of your neighbors and friends. So, it all boils down to only one thing—your *greed* to satisfy your ego-self. Money and wealth have become your *treasure*, and where your *heart* is.

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

Changing God's mind for what He has already destined for you is your disobedience. Obedience to God is graciously accepting and embracing any

adversity and calamity in life so that you may learn valuable lessons from them, thereby enhancing your spiritual wisdom to continue your pathway of trust and obedience.

“Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”
(**Psalm** 90:12)

What is trusting in God? Trusting in God means believing in the veracity of His Word.

“so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” (**Isaiah** 55:11)

Letting God is letting go of *your* control of your destiny. God is in absolute control of *anything* and *everything* in this world.

“He says, ‘Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth.’” (**Psalm** 46:10)

Throughout ages, miracles have happened around the world—a testament to the indisputable fact that God is always in control of anything and everything, despite humans’ resistance to letting go of their own futile efforts and endeavors to control their own destinies.

Control is basic human instinct. Humans are inherently controlling. Out of fear and insecurity, our ancestors living as early as in the Stone Age strove to survive in a dangerous environment, and thus developing their controlling fight-or-flight instinct.

So, let go of your control of anything that is disobedience to God.

An Illustration

In the famous Parable of the Prodigal Son (**Luke** 15), the younger son asked his father for his fair share of his estate. The father gave him his fair share. With his fortune, the younger son traveled to a distant country, where he led

a sinful life, and squandered all his fortune. His financial failure was followed by a natural disaster in the form of a famine. He learned the hard way that covetousness would not make him happy. Ultimately, he became penitent and returned to his father who welcomed him with open arms.

The father was like God, letting a sinner go his own way without stopping him, but would welcome him back if he becomes obedient and penitent, letting go of his sins and acknowledging his own disobedience.

In the real world, parents may think they can still control the finance of their children by setting up a trust fund or foundation. But they cannot control their children's perceptions of money. So, do not try to control what is uncontrollable.

The bottom line: Letting go of your control to let God is your trust and obedience in God, who will take over the control of everything in your life.

(4) The Sin and the Evil

Lack of trust and disobedience to God may bring out the evil and the sin of man. According to Scripture, Adam and Eve's disobedience to God began humans' departure from God's way to their own way of sin and brokenness.

¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (**Genesis** 2: 16-17)

But it must be noted that moral evil from freedom to choose did not come from God. Quite the contrary, the goodness of God is to make humans' wrongs right someday.

⁹When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. ¹⁰They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (**Revelation** 6: 9-10)

The Seven Deadly Sins

The Bible calls the dark side of human nature “sin.” None of us is exempt from sin. Life is always an inner struggle between what is perceived in an individual’s moral system as “right” and the dark opposing force inside to do just the opposite. To make matters worse, most of us are really quite good at self-deception. Either we deceive ourselves into thinking that the dark opposing force does not exist in ourselves, or we simply inflate our own personal virtues to overshadow the dark force within us.

The Bible says there are Seven Deadly Sins.

The Deadly Sin of Pride

Pride is feeling good about who you are and what you have done or accomplished. Pride comes from your attachments to your social status, your success in your life goals, and your wealth. They not only define who think you are, but also separate you from others, making you special and unique.

But pride is the deadliest of the Seven Deadly Sins because not only it is the root of all evils but also it separates you from God due to your thirst for control and power, instead of trust and obedience.

The antidote to the Sin of Pride is humility and letting go.

The Deadly Sin of Envy

With pride, you see yourself better than some people in some aspects but maybe not as good as others in other aspects of your life. Because of your pride, you may then become envious of them. You just want to surpass them in all aspects of your life pursuits in terms of desire, quality, and possession.

An Illustration

Paris Hilton is the great-granddaughter of the founder of the Hilton Hotels.

Being given the nickname “Star” by her mother and grandmother, and growing up in fame and prestige, Paris Hilton began her modeling career as a teenager. Due to her own insatiable craving and demand for celebrity status and the media attention, she also began her other career pursuits through her books, businesses, music, and screen appearances. For

example, Paris earned the Teen Choice Award for her portrayal in the film *House of Wax*, and her first book, *Confessions of An Heiress* landed on the *New York Times* best-seller list. As a result of her over-indulgence in staying at the top spotlight in the tabloids, Paris continued her pursuits in music ventures and television shows, such as *The World According to Paris* and *Hollywood Love Story*.

But the *Guinness World Record* in 2007 named Paris Hilton “the most overrated celebrity”; and, according to the media, “the worst actress of the decade.”

In 2006, Paris Hilton was even arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol, as well as for violating the terms of her probation by driving with her suspended license.

Serving her short jail sentence might have been a new beginning for Paris Hilton—making her realize that contentment could be the way to ending her endless envy of others, who, in her mind’s eye, are always better and more successful than herself.

The antidote to the Sin of Envy is contentment and gratitude.

The Deadly Sin of Lust

Lust is sexual impurity. Lust is strong desire to live a rich and lascivious life. Lust is animal impulse for power and survival.

Lust for sex

You are a sexual being, and your sexuality is a part of who and what you are—a gift from God. So, you are to use that gift to refrain from doing what God forbids. God stipulates that sex is to exist only in the marriage of one man to one woman and further stipulates that the gift must exist in the ways God commands and not in the ways humans want (**1 Corinthians 7:1-5**).

So, it is sinful to have sex outside of marriage, as well as sinful not to have sex within marriage.

Yes, the human body has a spiritual purpose with a lifelong discipline to control its sexual desires.

But if the human mind is obsessed with the question “What if it is right, and nobody gets hurt?”, then sex, which is life-giving but with its own control and boundaries, may fuel itself into self-destructive flames.

Biblical Illustrations

King David, despite his constant efforts in seeking God’s wisdom, also demonstrated his darker side of committing the sin of lust.

One night, King David saw **Bathsheba**, the wife of one of his generals, bathing on the rooftop. Succumbing to his own sin of lust, King David sent for Bathsheba, and committed adultery with her. To gratify his lust, King David even purposely sent the general to the war front to have him killed so that he could marry the general’s widow.

King David eventually married Bathsheba. Although penitent for his sins, God punished King David, and their firstborn son died.

King Solomon, the second son of King David, despite his profound human wisdom, violated God’s standards of sexual purity. His decision to disobey God and marry foreign women with their different gods led to his own idolatry. As a punishment for his sins, God divided Israel, and Solomon suffered bitterness and emptiness at the end of his life.

The difference between King David and King Solomon is that King David always lived in the presence of the Lord because he always turned back to God with remorse and repentance, while King Solomon only distanced himself from God with no contrition and remorse.

So, living in the presence of the Lord may remind you of your own accountability to Him, without which you will continue to indulge in the sin of adultery.

A Contemporary Illustration

Harvey Weinstein, former Hollywood film producer, was charged with sexual abuse allegations in 2017. More than 80 women claimed that Harvey Weinstein had sexually abused them in the past decades, and thus initialing and sparking the #MeToo social media movement. The “Weinstein effect”

had finally led to his own downfall: he was arrested in 2018, and convicted in 2020, and sentenced to 23 years in prison.

Because of the humans' prevalent lust for sex, the #ChurchToo movement also began to bring to light on the sexual abuse and assault in churches and religious communities. The #ChurchToo movement is a testament to institutional betrayal, victim blaming and shaming, as well as the silencing of victims and survivors—other deadly sins related to the Deadly Sin of Lust for sex. The accusations of abuse and cover-ups inside churches and religious institutions then began to surface and receive public attention during the late 1980s.

It is human pride that ignites the lust for sex and generates the deceit for its cover-up. The antidote to lust for sex is chastity, which is sexual purity.

To sum up, God hates sexual sin. He hates any defilement of the gift of sexuality, and He hates any dishonoring of marriage, which is the only right context for sexuality.

Lust for money

Lust for money and lust for sex are inter-related in that one often promotes the other. Many people lust for money because money can also gratify their lust for sex.

An Illustration

Barbara Woolworth Hutton, also known as “the poor little rich girl”, was one of the wealthiest women in the world during the Great Depression. She had experienced an unhappy childhood with the early loss of her mother at age five and the neglect of her father, and thus setting her the stage for a life of difficulty in forming love relationships.

Married and divorced seven times, she acquired grand foreign titles, but was maliciously treated and exploited by several of her husbands. Publicly, she was much envied for her lavish lifestyle and her exuberant wealth; privately, she was very insecure and unhappy, leading to her addiction and fornication.

She died of a heart attack at age 66. At her death, the formerly wealthy Hutton was on the verge of bankruptcy resulting from the exploitation by

others around her, as well as by her own lavish and luxurious lifestyle.

Barbara was the “unhappy poor little rich girl”! She was widely reported in the media, and her story was even made into a Hollywood movie: “The Poor Little Rich Girl.”

The reality is that Barbara simply had too many attachments in her life: beauty, celebrity, fame, love, and above all, wealth—they had created the illusions of “lust for sex” and “lust for money” not only for herself but also for others around her. Wealth and fornication had made Barbara into the poor little rich girl.

The antidote to lust for money is generosity, which is sharing and giving.

Lust for power

Lust for power is an insatiable human desire for power and control due to pride and insecurity.

Lord Acton, a 19th century English historian, once said: “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Indeed, power corrupts those who achieve it or inherit it. The process of lusting for power often involves fraud, dishonesty, exploitation, manipulation, and victimization, among other sins and vices. To seek power, humans would do just about anything to get what they want, thinking that they would even get away with murder.

In the modern era, it is not uncommon for presidents to expand their presidential power and prerogatives. To illustrate, **President Trump** had implied that he could undermine the rule of law with self-pardon, although he insisted that he had not done anything wrong or illegal. Even **Rudy Giuliani** jokingly said that President Trump could not be indicted even if he were to shoot former FBI Director **James Comey**.

The antidote to lust for power is a deflated ego to control others.

The Deadly Sin of Wrath

Pride makes you focus more on yourself than on others. As a result of this

separateness, you often see yourself better than and more superior to others. This arrogant mindset often leads you to expect others not only to praise and compliment you, but also to defer to your desires and wishes. Not getting what you expect as your “rights” is the source of conflicts with others, resulting in wrath, hostility, and even revenge.

An Illustration

Near the end of 2016, a road rage occurred in Arkansas that ended in the tragic death of a 3-year-old child.

A woman, with her 3-year-old grandson sitting at the back of her car, stopped at a stop sign. A man in the car right behind honked her for not starting her car immediately, but the woman honked back; thus, the road rage began with the man firing a gun shot at the back of the woman’s car, with her 3-year-old grandson sitting at the back of her car.

Stopping too long at a stop sign or wanting to get to a place on time might be *everything* to the man. Having the right to remain where she was might also be *everything* to the woman, so she naturally honked back in wrath.

Unfortunately, the wrath of the man and that of the woman ended in tragedy affecting the best and the rest of their lives.

Wrath may be present in you to serve the purpose to release some conflicts, issues, and problems deep inside you that need to be resolved. Remember, the world always reflects your actions: if you lash out in wrath, then the world lashes back at you with the same wrath. The antidote to anger is peace and forgiveness.

The Deadly Sin of Greed

With pride, humans may have excessive love or desire to get more of what they want to increase their pride. Greed is that intense desire to acquire and accumulate large amounts of that something, whether it is money or any material thing.

An Illustration

Bernard Madoff, former financial investor, began his infamous Ponzi

scheme to lure greedy investors into believing that earlier investors would be paid much more than their later counterparts, and not from product sales. His “get rich quick” pyramid scheme earned him billions of dollars.

Madoff’s Ponzi’s scheme, a form of financial fraud, finally collapsed, and in 2009 he was sentenced to federal prison for life. It was greed that had led Madoff to committing the largest financial fraud in history.

Fraud is not only common but also prevalent in the financial world due to the presence of humans’ greed.

Recently, in 2020, **Richard Burr**, the Republican Senator from North Carolina, was being investigated for selling stock ahead of the market crash due to coronavirus fears. The Senator then resigned from his chairmanship of Senate Intelligence Committee after the FBI seized his cell phone for further investigation.

As Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee and a member of the Health Committee, Richard Burr had access to some of the government’s most highly classified information about threats to America’s security and public health concerns. He had even said: “The United States today is better prepared than ever before to face emerging public health threats, like the coronavirus.” Apparently with classified information about the coronavirus, Richard Burr sold his shares right *before* the market plunged.

Of course, Richard Burr defended his actions, saying that he relied solely on public information and his own financial advisor.

Greed occurs not just in the financial world, but also in everyday life and living; for example, people go to casinos or line up for hours to get their lottery tickets.

The antidote to greed is, paradoxically, generosity, which is giving-away without expecting anything in return.

The Deadly Sin of Gluttony

Gluttony is the sin of over-consumption and over-indulgence in anything and everything.

In ancient times, food was not so plentiful as modern times, and so over-consumption of food was considered a sin because it caused deprivation in others. Nowadays, some buffet restaurants may still have notices reminding customers to take only what they can eat. This may avoid millions of food items being fed to landfills annually.

Gluttony is not just about food; it is also about over-indulgence in material things.

An Illustration

Imelda Marcos is the former First Lady of **President Ferdinand Marcos**, who had been the President of the Philippines for more than two decades. In 1986, after a revolution in the country, the couple were exiled to the United States.

Imelda Marcos left behind 3,000 pairs of shoes, along with a vast collection of expensive clothes and accessories. It was widely reported in the news worldwide, and she was even called the “Marie Antoinette with shoes.”

Did Imelda get to wearing those 3,000 pairs of shoes? Probably, it would have taken more than eight years for her to do so.

Amassing illegally billions of dollars and indulging herself in living a lavish and luxurious lifestyle of excess, Imelda was subsequently convicted of a crime of corruption after she and her family were allowed to go back to the Philippines in 1991.

Greed is wanting more, and gluttony is getting more for more. So, the antidote to gluttony is moderation or temperance.

The Deadly Sin of Sloth

Sloth is human laziness. Sloth is your failure to do things that you are supposed to do. In the biblical sense, it is your “not doing” what you should do with God, such as saying your daily prayers and reading His Word if you are a believer.

We are all created in this world for a purpose. Given that we are all somehow inter-connected with one another, our “doing or not doing” will somehow

affect others as well.

Living in reality is about only two things: “being” and “doing.”

Your “being” is about who you *think* you are: your self-beliefs, your life goals, and your life passions.

Your “doing” is about making decisions and taking actions to earn your living, while manifesting and validating your true “being.”

Do you have an education or the skills to make a living? If not, then *do something* about that? You may have the self-belief of your own incompetence or incapability to do certain things. Then, you may have two options: one, *changing* your pre-conceived mindset about what you can and cannot do; the other, *self-acceptance*, which is accepting who you really are and all the consequences of being who you are meant to be.

The first option means you must now *change* yourself no matter what. Life is all about changes and getting wisdom from those changes. Without changes, nothing can or will be done. The second option means you are willing to do a low-paying job, such as working at the checkout of a grocery store.

If you want to become a professional with a high-paying job, then you must learn and acquire the skills and the expertise, backed by related training, to become an expert in the profession of your choice.

To start a business, you must have your own innovative ideas that make you “think out of the box.” To turn your business into success, you must show your *passion, motivation, perseverance*—they all require your *doing*, and not just your talking about it.

Not doing what you are supposed to do is *sloth*. Essentially, it is neither acquiring the skills to do a high-paying job nor wanting to do a low-paying one—end up with a career of crimes and wrongdoings. Not living in reality is the origin of all deadly sins.

An Illustration

Christopher Paul Gardner is an American businessman, entrepreneur, investor, author, and philanthropist.

In the early 1980s, Gardner was very poor and homeless; he was often sleeping on the floor of a public toilet. Gardner never dreamt that he would become a multi-millionaire one day. His very inspiring life story was even made into a hit Hollywood movie, starring **Will Smith**: “The Pursuit of Happyness.”

Gardner was brought up with the belief that he could be anything that he wanted to be with his doing. He was homeless, but he was not hopeless. He often dreamed of wealth and success, and his dreams were not mirages. Because of his right doing, he made his dreams come true.

Initially, Gardner made his living by selling medical equipment. He did not make enough money to make both ends meet, and his poverty made him homeless for a year.

Then, one day, Gardner met a stockbroker in a red Ferrari, whom he asked for internship. Gardner’s incredible drive and sustained enthusiasm finally got him his internship.

After his internship, Gardner applied for a position in that investment firm. On the day before his interview for that position, Gardner lost his shirt and clothing. Nevertheless, he attended the interview even though he was not “appropriately dressed” for the occasion. It was Gardner’s “determined doing” that got him his job.

Gardner had a successful investment career, and he finally opened his own investment firm, Gardner Rich & Co.

More than two decades later, after the death of his wife, who challenged him to find his own true happiness and fulfillment in the remainder of his life, Gardner then made a complete career change. He became a philanthropist and a remarkable motivation speaker traveling around the world, focusing not on his own wealth, but on humanity and helping others to get their happiness through their “doing” of what needs to be done.

So, sloth is disobeying God’s instructions to work, and the antidote is obedience.

The bottom line: The Seven Deadly Sins show the vulnerability of man to

committing sins. So, turn to God for forgiveness, and not condemnation, so that all evil and suffering can be overcome.

Satan

Satan, the devil, is real. In the Bible, the “flesh” is where Satan drives humans to oppose God.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. (**Romans 8: 5-6**)

Satan is a liar who works on the human mind to create the desires in humans that always blind the eyes of unbelievers.

“The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” (**2 Corinthians 4:4**)

Satan creates doubt about the Word of God in vulnerable circumstances, such as anger, frustration, and loneliness.

To fight against Satan, believe the *whole* Bible, and not just part of it. Remember, evil is something that God allows, but does not condone, for the sake of freedom of will that was given to humans from the beginning of creation.

Paradoxically, “physical” evils can be a manifestation of the goodness of God. In the Scripture, Jesus saw a man blind from birth, and He told his disciples that the man’s blindness had nothing to do with the sin of the man or that of his parents. Rather, his blindness “happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him” (**John 9:3**) In other words, man’s sin can demonstrate the goodness of God, who is always ready to forgive.

The bottom line: Physical evils, such as sickness, famine, war, and death, are the result of moral evil. They exist because humans have sinned:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (**Romans 3:23**)

But God Himself took the consequences of our sin, so every person can have access to His forgiveness and His salvation. As a result, all sin, evil, and suffering will someday be completely ended.

(5) The Justice and the Injustice

God is a God of fairness and justice. He rules this world in justice.

“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne: love and faithfulness go before you” (**Psalms 89: 14**)

In addition, God is calling for justice throughout the Bible.

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.” (**Micah 6:8**)

But God’s justice may not come right away, and this may make some people think that God is *not* just.

An Illustration

Archbishop Valerian Trifa was originally a priest of the Rumanian church. In 1950, he immigrated to the United States, claiming that he was a displaced person from a Nazi concentration camp. Soon after his arrival in the United States, he became a priest, and rose quickly to the rank of bishop and then archbishop.

But Valerian’s true identity was revealed and uncovered by a dentist, who recognized him and swore that the Archbishop was working for the Nazi during the Holocaust and that he was responsible for killing the Jews. But the Archbishop vehemently denied all those accusations, and the case went on for two decades without any conclusion or conviction due to the lack of evidence. But, with the advancement in forensic science, the Archbishop was ultimately convicted because he had accidentally left his saliva and fingerprint on one the execution cards kept by the German government.

In 1982, the Archbishop was convicted of being a Nazi supporter, responsible for killing Jews and other civilians in World War II. He was to be deported from the United States. However, no country would accept him, and he was finally deported from the United States in 1984 when Portugal gave him refuge.

It took decades to bring the Archbishop to justice.

As a believer and a priest, what was on the mind of Valerian Trifa when he signed those execution orders during World War II? Was he thinking only of his own survival?

Injustice comes from man, who misuses power or freedom to choose to do all the wrong things, resulting in harm and inequality to others.

Jesus clearly says about the final judgment and what will happen to all who commit acts of injustice.

“I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me” (**Matthew** 25:42-43)

So, to pursue justice: denounce greed; call for the right use of power; stand up for those who suffer; help the poor and the forsaken; and oppose those who justify the wicked.

(6) The Daily Living Wisdom

The New Testament brings an end to the nation of Israel but certainly not an end to justice, especially that of the LORD.

Justice often creates “fear” in those who are righteous. But “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (**Proverbs** 9:10); it is your fear that gives you the daily living wisdom to live in the presence of God.

But *how* and with *what*?

Praying and prayers

Praying is not just about asking what you want; it is about your conversation or communication with God. Praying should be done before getting up and before going to bed, and at least several times throughout the day.

Remember, prayer is God's gift to anyone who prays for that free gift.

⁹ "This, then, is how you should pray:

'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
¹⁰ your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
¹¹ Give us today our daily bread.
¹² And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
¹³ And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.' (**Matthew 6**)

Pray to the Holy Spirit for wisdom and forgiveness:

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen."

Also, pray to the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus:

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

It is important that praying is your talking to God through your heart, and not with your words; repeating a right set of words is not as important as your heart talking to Him.

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

Meditation and mindfulness

Meditate on the Words of God, and not just committing them to memory.

Find a quiet place where you can sit undisturbed. Your body must be erect; do not lean back on anything, if possible. Before you begin your meditation, recall a short message of the LORD in your mind.

Begin your meditation by focusing on your breathing. Your first thought may not come to you right away. When it does, dismiss it by refocusing on your breathing. Within a timeframe of 10 minutes or so, you may find that fewer thoughts crop up in your mind. Then, one day, you may suddenly find that you have stepped into a different world with total tranquility and clarity of mind. Even though it may last only a moment or two, the sensation is totally nondescript.

Meditation is life changing. Find time to practice it every day.

Mindfulness is purposeful attention to the present moment.

Practice *mindfulness walking*.

You can select the first two verses from **Psalm 23**: “The LORD Is My Shepherd.” Repeat each syllable in your mind with each foot. Always begin your right foot first followed by your left foot:

“The Lord is my She-pherd, I lack nothing”
R L R L R L R L R L

Mindfulness walking—instead of listening to the radio or talking on the phone—intensifies the presence of God in your daily life.

Endurance and patience

God’s Word is judgmental. Human suffering is inevitable in the form of frustration and disappointment in their daily endeavors. But, in fact, they are God’s calling to their trust and obedience. Impatience only generates doubt, anger, and disobedience.

“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.”
(**Psalm 27:14**)

So, your response to God's calling is your perseverance to remain quiet with prayers to control your negative thoughts and emotions. Let the Holy Spirit take control of your life and give you the willingness to wait.

(7) The Penitence and the Forgiveness

Penitence is your state of mind feeling regretful and sorrowful over your actions or inactions. To be penitent is to feel repentant of your sins and disobedience to God's Words. In other words, you feel you are "poor in spirit" (**Matthew 5:3**). True penitence involves humility to seek God's help and forgiveness.

Penitence is not the same as remorse. You can feel remorse about what you did wrong but without feeling penitent. That is, you may wish you had done *differently* but not necessarily *righteously* according to the Word of God. True penitence involves your "worldly sorrow" for the sin you committed.

"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death." (**2 Corinthians 7:10**)

So, do not just focus on your own "worldly sorrow", which is self-serving in emphasizing your own sorrows and negative consequences. Instead, focus on the "Godly penitence" that is instrumental in turning you from repeating that same sin in the future.

"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." (**John 8:11**)

Punishing yourself cannot pay for your sin. Only the blood of Jesus can cleanse you from your sin.

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." (**1 John 1:7**)

Your humble penitence is your own admission and acknowledgment that God's forgiveness of your sin is undeserved except through Jesus who calls you to a lifetime of penitence.

So, ask God to forgive you through Jesus, believing that Jesus died to pay for your forgiveness—and He will forever forgive your sin.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (**John 3: 16-17**)

The truth of the matter is that you become a born-again believer of Jesus only through your true penitence.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.” (**Romans 8:1-2**)

(8) The Salvation and the Redemption

“Redemption” refers to undoing the effects of sin for all mankind. The word itself means to “buy back.” Biblical redemption centers on God, who saves His chosen ones from sin, evil, trouble, bondage, and death. Redemption is an act of God's grace, by which He rescues and restores His people. “Redemption” is all-inclusive.

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (**John 3:16-17**)

“Salvation” is what God brings to everyone in this world according to His perfect plan and purpose. God desires that all people not only know what Jesus did on earth but also have the forgiveness Christ earned on the cross. But there are some who do not want to know the biblical truth, and others who reject the good news even after they have heard it. “Salvation” is personal and subjective.

Jesus did pay for the sins of all, but you must *believe* it. Jesus even said He would go away and let the Holy Spirit take over.

“But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.” (**John 16:7**)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (**Acts 1:8**)

So, the Holy Spirit helps humans' redemption by being present as *conscience* in their minds, giving human beings a sense of their guilt about any wrongdoing, and a sense of righteousness when they live according to God's laws.

The Holy Spirit gives everyone the power of the Word of God to do all the righteous things to receive his or her own salvation.

¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**)

The Holy Spirit provides humans with sanctification to *change* their sinful habits as well as to *understand* the conviction of sin even before they sin.

⁸When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; (**John 16:8-10**)

The Holy Spirit also gives humans the courage not only to testify for them but also to be closer to them.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerus, Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (**Acts 1:8**)

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.” (**Acts 4:32**)

So, welcome the Holy Spirit to receive your own eternal salvation.

(9) The Awakening and the Enlightenment

Now, with the eternal salvation from the Holy Spirit, you still need to continue your belief journey.

Why? It is because the belief journey does not have a destination.

So, where would that belief journey now lead you to?

The Holy Spirit may further awaken you to what God has destined for you in this world, and to open your eyes to see above and beyond. Awakening is the pathway to enlightenment.

Enlightenment has its origin from *emptiness* or *nothingness*—the origin of Creation.

Emptiness is also a way of human perception: looking at life experiences without adding anything to them, or without taking away anything from them. It is the thinking of the mind with no assumption and no presumption—that is, a divine mindset of acceptance and embracing with trust and obedience all the absolute truths of human existence.

Enlightenment is an endless process of *knowing* and *understanding* anything and everything that is simply there and is available to all since the beginning of time. It is like knowing that at sunrise you will see sunlight if you just open your eyes; its presence is *permanent*—but you just have to *open* your eyes to see its presence, and even the blind can just *feel* the presence of the sunlight. Likewise, you may feel the presence of God in everything around you, but you just have to look around you.

An Illustration of Enlightenment

Li Ching-Yuen, a Chinese herbalist, martial artist, and tactical advisor, known for his extreme longevity of well over 200 years, gave his own profound wisdom on enlightenment:

“Before I had studied Zen (Eastern philosophy) for thirty years,
I saw mountains as mountains,
and waters as waters.
When I arrived with a more intimate knowledge,
I saw that mountains are not mountains,
and waters are not waters.
But now that I have got its very substance,
I am at rest.
For it is just that I see mountains once again as mountains, and waters
once again as waters.”
(Li Ching-Yuen)

Enlightenment is effortless and spontaneous.

So, if you strive to know and understand anything and everything about God, the enlightenment may not come right away. But that does not matter because you *already* have the spiritual wisdom to *seek* God.

In the beginning of your belief journey, God might have changed one aspect of your life, making you “see” that “mountains are *not* mountains, and waters are *not* waters.” In other words, you were beginning to see God’s role in your everyday life.

By now, with increasing faith, as you continue with your belief journey, God is changing *every* aspect of your life, and you are seeing anything and everything through the lens of the Holy Spirit; you have become “transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (**Romans** 12:2) Now, anything and everything that is happening in your life has become the “new normal”; accordingly, you see “mountains once again as mountains, and waters once again as waters”—which is the *enlightenment* itself.

Yes, illusion and delusion may go on indefinitely, but enlightenment may take only a moment or two. It is the very moment of consciousness without being self-conscious.

Enlightenment is the realization and understanding that “nothingness” is in fact everything. God is “nothingness”—invisible, inexplicable, and unfathomable. All humans will one day become “nothingness” too by returning to dust. But returning to dust is actually the only pathway to

everything; physical death is just a way station on the belief journey to eternity, and that “nothingness” ultimately becomes *everything* in the life to come.

In short, enlightenment is the spiritual wisdom to understand the mysteries and the paradoxes of spiritual life.

(10) The Coming and the Revelation

Both Christians and Muslims believe that Jesus will return on the Judgment Day to judge believers and unbelievers, as well as the living and the dead.

“so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.” (**Hebrews 9:28**)

The Bible says no man knows *when* and not even the angels know the time of Jesus’ coming back.

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (**Matthew 24:36**)

Although no one knows *when* Jesus will come again, the world is growing increasingly dark and evil, and is getting closer to God’s Day of Judgment.

So, you must be ready for Jesus’ Second Coming by constantly praying, listening to God’s Word, and doing what needs to be done through faith and righteousness.

“So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.” (**Matthew 24:44**)

Jesus warned that someday this world as we know it will come to an end—not because of a war or natural disaster, but because God will intervene and bring it to an end. But *when*? Nobody knows. The future is in God’s hands,

and He alone will bring an end to the world when He chooses to. So, a believer must *believe* in that.

¹²‘Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. ¹³I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. (**Revelation** 22:12-13)

Before Jesus’ Second Coming, all humans will go through suffering and death.

Death and Suffering

In the Book of Revelation, John describes the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, who have been given authority to kill with sword, famine, and plague, and by means of the beasts of the earth. Eternal death is imminent for all and sundry. After that, all will be judged according to their sins they have committed.

Whenever sin is committed, God's law will pronounce a curse that demands death on the person who has committed that sin. Humans by nature are in state of guilt, condemnation, defilement, and unbelief; so, all human efforts to save themselves are futile. The righteousness of God is the only standard of judgment for all mankind. At the Final Judgment, sinners will not be compared with other sinners. Instead, they will be compared only with the righteousness of Christ, and all who come short are sinners, and “the wages of sin is death.” (**Romans** 6:23)

For a believer, death is no more than a rite of passage to eternal life. It is something to be joyful about and not something to be crying for.

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (**Revelation** 21:4)

A believer must believe in “born twice—die once” to be saved from the “second death.”

Suffering is inevitable—it is a testament to humans' trust and obedience.

“If anyone is to go into captivity,
into captivity they will go.
If anyone is to be killed with the sword,
with the sword they will be killed.”

This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of God's people. (**Revelation** 13:10)

The New Kingdom of Heaven

Jesus' "Second Coming" will bring with Him a new heaven, a new earth with a new Jerusalem. The new heaven will be like a family of immortal beings. All who inherit eternal life in the Kingdom of God will experience the fullness of their salvation.

“Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children.” (**Revelation** 21:7)

The saved ones will be living in a setting similar to that of Adam and Eve's Garden of Eden. The biblical story of man began in the Garden of Eden with man's rejection of the tree of life. Now, in the New Kingdom of Heaven, God's immortal family is forever dwelling before His throne, while enjoying the fruits of the tree of life. It is the kind of fruit—the product of the righteous relationship with God—that will make eternal life worth living.

Yes, God is “the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (**Revelation** 22:13)

Belief is always a mystery. Even for many believers, much of Scripture is still wrapped in mysteries.

For example, the night before the Crucifixion, Jesus told His disciples that He would send them the Holy Spirit:

“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.” (**John** 16:13)

The Holy Spirit will shed light on the truth—including all the truths behind the mysteries of the Bible.

Your belief does not promise the absolute understanding of everything given to you in the Words of God. But your belief gives you access to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus who will guide you into those vital and ultimate truths about life and living.

A Summary of Your Belief Journey

- Begin with your intent to believe and to change yourself for the rest of your life.
- Have an empty mind with no expectation. Surrender yourself to God.
- Believe you are who you are meant to be. Give up your material desires and wants.
- With humility, let go of all your attachments to the world—you are in this world but not of this world.
- Connect yourself to others to see your own imperfections to seek God’s grace and blessings.
- Study the Bible, and believe God’s Word, which is a gift to humans.
- Live in the presence of God through prayers and meditation of His Words.
- Trust and obey God through your action of patience and perseverance.
- Confess your sin and the moral evil of your freedom to choose.
- With penitence, seek Jesus’ salvation through the Holy Spirit.

- Let God's justice reveal your eternal life and the New Kingdom of Heaven.

THE CONCLUSION

The truth of the matter is that we are living in a world of sin and evil—that means we *all*, with no exception, sin and do wrong things now and then. The irony is that humans' or even God's laws only make humans sin rather than avoid sin. For example, according to **Romans 7** and **8**, the Spiritual law may tell you what sins are, but your flesh generates your own sinful passion aroused by the law. Because the law is spiritual, but you are unspiritual and in the flesh, so you may not do what you want to do, and end up doing what you hate to do, and that is to sin.

But God sent His only Son in the likeness of sinful man to die on the Cross, thereby condemning and putting to death the sin in the flesh. Therefore, the mind controlled and governed by the flesh is death, while that inspired by the Spirit is life and peace. This explains *why* you need to become a believer: not just to seek eternal salvation, but also to set you free from the law of sin and death so that you may live in reality with accountability to God.

THE END

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