

And then came Cancer

*Experiencing
the Reality
of Jesus*

An Autobiography by
Bill Heinrich

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This is the story of William "Bill" Heinrich as he weaved his way through life as a public school teacher, a businessman, through a broken family, through homelessness, through diagnosed terminal cancer, to what he is today a Bible teacher and professor.



Rev. Dr. William H. "Bill" Heinrich
MS. Ed, MA. Bible, MA. Min, D.Min.

People in other countries sometimes think that Christians in America live very comfortable and trouble-free lives. For many people that may be true, but for my dear friend, Bill Heinrich, that was hardly the case. His testimony, that appears

below, will bare witness to that fact. But first, my observation --

A short time after Bill and his family made a commitment to serve the Lord, the proverbial wheels began to fall off the wagon as he experienced one setback and disaster after another. Some of those events were unavoidable, some he accepts as byproducts of poor personal decisions, and others came at the hands of people who professed to be Christians. With the accumulated effect of all these events, life had become so painful that he became depressed and desperate.

He believed the Lord to be a loving, good and caring God, but could not understand why God was allowing him to be put into such pain and misery. He begged for answers, but often got only silence.

In desperation, he got to the point where he wanted to take his own life, but then God spoke loud and clearly. The Lord would not allow that to happen as Bill explains in his testimony and autobiography. In any case, all those events represented a very challenging and painful period in his life. While most of those issues were resolved, he was to face a new and different battle, terminal cancer.

As if Bill had not experienced enough devastation, God allowed another big blow to come into his life. A doctor informed him that a problem, with which he had for many years, had been restudied and it was now identified as an incurable form of cancer. Needless to say, the

news was devastating as he was given little hope to survive the disease. But God again answered his prayers. He was blessed by the grace of God and was given life in exchange for giving up his left hip, left leg, and parts of both lungs. His faith and commitment to serve his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ goes without parallel.

Today Bill serves as a seminar speaker, adjunct professor, counselor, and chaplain. He is the author of several books. His most recent book, an eBook on the life of Jesus titled *Mysteries of the Messiah*, is considered by some to be among the most comprehensive studies and writings on the life and times of Jesus published in the past century. He is an inspiration to those who are going through struggles and trying times and a testimony to God's faithfulness in response to our needs and prayers. Be inspired and blessed as you read Bill's biography and take the roller coaster ride through his life learning how both the big as well as all the little events in his life contributed to the package of who Bill Heinrich is today. His testimony is one of God's faithfulness, even when we may sometimes wrongly think God does not hear or care about us.

- Edward Kabakjian, Ed.D.
Professor Emeritus of Teacher Education at the
College of New Jersey

PART 1 *The Early Years*

I was born into the home of two wonderful, loving German immigrants, who had settled on a farm in upper Bucks County in southeastern Pennsylvania. They conveyed their cultural heritage and values to me. They were not prone to speak of being “born again,” but did instill in me strong Judeo-Christian values. As an only child, I was the object of their love and joy; they centered their lives around me. Our home was modest and, according to income averages, we were poor. Still, they provided very well for me; I could not have had a better home.

We attended a local Mennonite church where I learned about Jesus and how much He loves me. I remember singing so many children’s hymns, but my favorite was “Jesus Loves Me.” In this country church were friends, fellowship, and a special

Sunday school teacher by the name of Milton Keeler. Brother Milton was a home-bred scholar of Israel and of end-time biblical prophecies. He instilled in me a passion to someday visit Israel, as well as thoughts to seriously consider ministry service. He was also the greatest influence for me to make a decision for Christ when I was 17. Years later I, in turn, would lead my parents in a sinner's prayer.

While my parents encouraged me to study and to do well in school, I had a poor self-image. Growing up with German parents, German became my first language and I found learning English very difficult when entering school. I failed first grade. Then I nearly failed fourth and sixth grades and could not enter college prep in high school. Eventually, I entered college, but only by going to a technical school first. While studying to become a teacher, I again considered entering the ministry, so I attended a summer session at a Bible college in Virginia. There, the academic requirements were very stringent. Some professors said that ten percent of their students received A's, while another ten percent failed. I was convinced their grading system would eliminate me. I concluded that, while someday I would become a teacher, the ministry was definitely not for me.

By the grace of God and many hard hours of study I received my bachelor's and master's degrees in education from Millersville University. While working toward these goals, I discovered that I had a mild learning disability. Then I understood why I had to study so hard when everyone else was on vacation. However, even

though I succeeded academically, I had become a workaholic – a trait that would later bring stress to my family.

In 1969 I married a wonderful girl, Christine, who was from a preacher's family in Illinois. I felt so honored to have a wife from a strong Christian family and she was a blessing beyond my wildest expectation. Two years later we were blessed with the first of four children who entered our lives Heidi, Hans, Wilhelm, and Christian. They were all two years apart with birthday season in the autumn of the year. Our family was off to a good start and I thoroughly enjoyed my tenure as a high school teacher throughout the 1970s.

My parents lived in a historic log and stone farmhouse and I converted part of the adjacent barn into a huge apartment. Christine, the kids, and I enjoyed living in the areas that were once occupied by cows and chickens when I was a child. It was wonderful to have my parents as neighbors so they could enjoy their grandchildren. My mother and Christine grew very close and, in fact, they were like mother and daughter. Life could not have been better.

Unfortunately, in my youthful years I had become very legalistic in my faith, while Christine spoke of having a relationship with Jesus. Essentially, I had grown to the point of believing that the Lord helps those who help themselves, words that sound spiritual but are far from it. Those with a passion of legalism tend to have a sense of superiority, while those who are sincerely searching for God, as Christine was, have a sense

of humility. These opposing belief systems eventually enhanced marital problems.

In 1973 my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. Her passing was a very traumatic time for both of us, but especially for Christine. She called upon the Lord for comfort and wisdom. God answered her request, which led to a much needed spiritual refreshment. However, with my mother's passing came the increased demands of care needed by my elderly father.

In hindsight, I see that we both came to marriage unprepared. It was too much pressure for us, especially since we were both spiritually immature. But what could we have done?

Reflective thoughts -

We all grow up with dreams and aspirations. How many have been privileged to have the perfect, or almost perfect, home setting only to find an incredibly difficult road somewhere in life? Today we live with horrifying statistics - such as one out of every three girls are sexually molested by their 18th birthday. The rise of drug and alcohol abuse is overloading human services agencies in every state and the war on poverty that began in the mid-1960s is a dismal failure. Crime is escalating and the moral foundations of the American culture are crumbling. The probability of someone not encountering one or more of these tragedies in life is almost impossible. I have found there are two "constants" that will always be with us. The first is that one

will constantly face challenges and temptations. The second is that God is always there to be your strength and guide. If He does not guide you around the fire, He will be with you in it. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all* (Psalm 34:19).

A Change of Direction

In 1974 a drastic event profoundly changed my life. As a teenager, I was once thrown off a young steer I was riding on our farm. What followed were occasional severe back problems, which plagued me two or three times a year. It was at one of those painful moments that Christine prayed for me and I was instantly healed. The problem never returned and I realized there was much more to God than I understood. This healing was the beginning of a personal revival; I laid legalism aside, as best as I could, and began to pursue God with her.

In the years that followed we became very active in our church and in various other ministries. I was a member of a local Christian school board. I purchased a large nine- bedroom house and leased it to a ministry that assisted troubled teenaged girls. We were cell group leaders in our church and Christine also led a dynamic women's Bible study. Her prayers always seemed to be extremely effective. Telling others about Jesus had become our primary interest, and my parents were the first with whom I prayed the sinner's prayer. Today they are with our Lord. Then in the mid-70s, Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam, fell to the Communists. We heard that some teenage "boat people" had difficulty finding

American homes. So for nine years our home was also home to four wonderful Vietnamese teens. We wanted to be a first century Christian family in the twentieth century. We were truly blessed of God.

My interests in education diminished in light of a more challenging and exciting career as a real estate developer and home builder. By 1980 I left teaching and stepped out in faith to build houses and do real estate development. First, however, we took our family to Florida, where I attended a ten-week school for lay ministers. It was about this time that I had a radical and painful dream. In the dream,

Our family had taken a trip to Florida where we were staying in a small cabin. It was near the edge of a river in a dense forest. For some reason, in the middle of the night I decided to run to another nearby cabin to get some oil. I wore no shoes or socks as I went down the clearly worn dirt path. However, as I walked, I discovered many deadly snakes along the pathway. I got the oil and returned to our cabin without stepping on any of these snakes. However, just as I was about to enter the door, I discovered I had one in my hand and it bit deep into my finger. The pain was incredible as the fangs sank deeper and deeper into me.

I woke up exhausted and out of breath. To me it had symbolic meanings. I recalled that *I had not entered the cabin*. The snake bite meant death, the oil was the Holy Spirit, the house represented

my life and, the fact that I had no shoes or socks meant that I was ill prepared for the trip. I felt that somewhere in my future, the dream would find significance. Little did I know how true this the symbolism would become.

Although my new business in real estate grew and blessings followed, it was more exciting to see Christian faith become a reality in the lives of our children. In December of 1982, Hans, who was nine years old, preached his first sermon in church. The following summer Heidi and Christine went on a missionary trip to Belize. There is little question that we were more involved in various family activities and ministries than the typical family and we loved it. This is not to say there were none of the typical family problems, but in the overall picture, life was very good.

At this time my wife desired to further her biblical training. I remembered very well the anointing she had when she prayed the prayer of healing for me and the other gifts with which the Lord blessed her. I was proud of her and when she decided to go to a Bible school, I purchased a beautiful silver Corvette to get her there.

Since my business had become quite successful, I decided to diversify. This new business venture was to be a family enterprise in which the kids would learn some entrepreneurial skills. So I purchased a small butcher shop and, with the help of the kids and some tradesmen, I converted it to an ice cream shop. It too was successful and it soon grew into a family restaurant.

The Academic and Spiritual Assault

In 1983 Christine began seminary studies in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. I thought it was a good school, since it was founded in the 1740s as a college to train men to become missionaries to the local Indians. I was unaware that liberalism had infiltrated this historic institution and that its doctrines had changed considerably. It was not long before she began to question the authenticity of Scripture and accepted liberation theology, feminist theology, and other modern teachings touted as truth. One theological viewpoint after another, each bathed in liberalism, entered our home. Life became very frustrating.

She told me of the *Documentary Hypothesis*, theory that the first five books of the Old Testament had not been written by Moses, but by four distinctly different writers and these books were later compiled by editors. She said this is now accepted as fact.

Along with this came the theological opinion that God revealed Himself to different people groups in different ways throughout the centuries. All this leads to, in essence, the false belief that that God sent Muhammad came to the Arabs, Jesus came to save the Jews, and other groups had their divine revelations. Hence, this kind of thinking believes there are many ways to God.

This theology is indirect contradiction to Jesus's statement in John 14:6 where He said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This radical anti-biblical thinking was not acceptable to me.

What shocked me the most was the so-called scholarly study known as *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. This monumental work by Albert Schweitzer (1911) arguably has done more to distort the truth to men and women in seminary than any other book. His teaching seriously questions if many of the words spoken by Jesus were actually spoken by Him, and furthermore, Schweitzer encouraged his readers to challenge such vital doctrines as the inspiration of Scripture.

I felt that Christine was accepting the words of her professors over the words of Scripture and the miracles the Lord had performed in our lives. She said her professors contended that they had proof that much of what Jesus said was actually a second century addition to the Bible by early Christian copyists. I had never heard of this nonsense. Consequently, I did not know how to respond in a manner that would change her mind. I was at a point of extreme disappointment, observing the changes in her, but unable to persuade her back to the biblical standard; that is, simply applying the instructions of life. I had a gut fear and feeling that she was not only leaving God, but that she would eventually leave the family as well.

What she believed not only opposed what I believed, but also what was preached Sunday after Sunday by her father during her childhood. In the meantime, on Sunday mornings I would sit in church and ponder what would become of my life; what would it be like to teach the Word of God to those who were hurting like me and needed to know the reality of Christ in their lives.

But that was only a daydream – now I had real issues to face and I did not know how to address them.

Later that year (1983) Christine developed a chronic back problem. Her plight was so bad that she could not even walk up or down the steps of our home and for months she essentially lived on the first floor. It was worse than anything we had ever experienced and all of our prayers failed to bring healing. What an irony: Nearly a decade earlier she had prayed for my back and the Lord healed me instantly. Now she was suffering every day with no healing in sight.

Reflective thoughts -

God has a perfect will and plan for each of us. At times we may be convinced we are following His will, when in fact we confuse our emotions with His voice. This can be in any area of life: dating, business, ministry, or whatever. This is why the writer of Proverbs said there is wisdom in multiple counselors.

There was a time when we were told to carefully discern messages preached to us from “the world.” Secularism has always desired to penetrate both Judaism and Christianity. However, in the past century, and in particular, in the past few decades, many pastors in evangelical pulpits have been preaching secularized messages. They have abandoned their position that the Bible is the infallible, inerrant, and inspired Word of God. The motto “Thy Word is Truth” that once was the guiding light for

a Virginia Bible college has become irrelevant to its professors.

Nonetheless, the words of Paul are timeless and nonnegotiable, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In the current cultural climate of political tolerance, the biblical precepts of our faith must not be compromised. We are to love and care for those who have other views, but abandoning God’s directives in order to be politically or socially tolerant is apostasy. Fortunately, God permits U-turns and calls wayward souls back come home.

The Challenge of Tragedies

Finally, in May of 1984, Christine reaffirmed her theological “liberation” from the faith she grew up with; from the faith we shared together. She no longer considered herself to be an evangelical, but was proud to accept the liberalism of the mainline seminaries. What followed surprised both of us. She had a complete nervous breakdown! In a single day she went from a happy wife and a loving and doting mother to a woman who appeared to be passionately suicidal, and seemed determined to kill herself regardless of the cost. I felt that the gates of hell had opened, the future suddenly looked bleak, and I was totally unprepared.

In the meantime, since our real estate business was good, we pursued an additional business

venture and opened a family restaurant (which would prove to be a major mistake on my part). I wondered if her illness was a divine judgment against us. How does one explain such horrific events? For years she wanted me to go to counseling and I stubbornly refused? Now I wondered if I contributed to her illness.

One day she told me that she was not feeling well and I thought she might have the flu or a cold. However, I was shocked when she showed me razor cuts up and down her left arm. I was absolutely stunned and quickly got her into a mental hospital near Philadelphia. It was just impossible to believe that this bright and beautiful woman, who had once been anointed and full of faith, was now trying to kill herself. In her spirit and emotions there must have been unimaginable pain and anguish. I wondered where it could have come from. This could not be happening to us. Everyone we knew began praying for her. Two months later, her doctor told me that she was one of the worst cases he had ever seen, but that while he would do his best, I needed to make final plans.

I cried like a kid. To this day I can remember driving home from Philadelphia on a dark, rainy, night and stopping along the highway to call her sister in Cleveland to explain what was happening. The loneliness was gut-wrenching. The following day, still crying, I went to the Strunk Funeral Home in Quakertown and made those final plans. I can still vividly remember walking past the caskets, selecting one, and making tentative plans while praying that I would never need to use them.

The pain was intense, and I prayed to God to help me with my four beautiful children, ages seven to thirteen. How could these innocent kids cope with this? I was in pain – possibly in some form of shock or denial. I could not imagine what had caused the suffering from which my wife was attempting to escape. The irony is that, throughout this time of illness, she tried to be the best loving mother she could possibly be. No greater love did any woman ever have for her children than she had. Yet she repeatedly attempted to kill herself, a paradox that boggled my mind.

Reflective thoughts -

Reflecting upon that horrible time, I now realize that I had “head” knowledge of God and His Word, but not “heart” knowledge. There is a huge difference between academically knowing God’s precepts and having them in your heart so they affect every aspect of your life. In the Christian life, we can make daily decisions based upon God’s divine promises and commandments. Back then, if the Word of God had been in my inner being, in my character, I would never have accepted the report of my wife’s condition that the doctor had given to me. I failed to have the “heart knowledge” and, as a result, I was ill prepared for this challenge and suffered a great deal pain needlessly.

Troubles, especially terrible and painful ones, can make us come to one of two conclusions about God. We will either turn

away from Him or run closer to Him. Those who have experienced traumatic events in life or legalistic parents will go to one of these two extremes. There are very few who stay in the middle ground.

Those who turn away from God usually do so for an unconscious reason – perhaps to inflict more pain upon those who hurt them or sometimes to inflict pain upon themselves. Whether the source was their parents, a former spouse, or significant other, the victim will reject that which the originator of the pain considered most important in life – even if it is faith in God. He has a reason for allowing things to happen in our lives. We may never understand His wisdom, but we simply have to trust Him.

Eventually Christine improved sufficiently to come home, but she was totally medicated. In the months that followed there were times when she seemed perfectly well. At other times she gave way to some terror in the middle of the night. Friends from church had compassion and tried to help in any way they could. Others read Scripture to me and insisted that if I confessed some hidden sin, she would be healed. In addition, there were those who said my wife was ill because I lacked faith for her healing. I began to feel that both my best friends and my worst enemies were in the church. With Christian friends like these, who needed enemies? I found myself alone; married, but a single parent with four kids, whose lives were also being torn apart one day at a time. I could not imagine the

anguish and instability they were enduring, let alone my own complex emotions and feelings.

Then, one evening, Christine had an auto accident. I went to get her with our two oldest children, Hans and Heidi. She was quite upset, but not injured, so we began our drive home. She told us how sorry she was for the accident, sorry to be alive, and how much better we would be without her. I tried to encourage her, but then she suddenly tried to jump out of the car while we were traveling the speed limit of 55 mph, nearly causing another accident. I then decided to take her to the mental ward at Grandview Hospital, which was much closer to our home. En route I could hardly keep her in the car, until the kids figured out that they could unscrew the door lock, thus trapping her in the front seat. What pain and insecurity the kids must have felt. Had I not been so involved with my pain, I could have been the father I needed to be. Likewise, Christine had deep emotional agonies that I simply could not imagine. Even with her skewed perspective of life, she desperately tried to be the best mother she could possibly be. Her love and dedication was never questioned.

Finally, she was back in the hospital. Driving home in the lonely night, I wondered, "God, why don't you answer prayers?" I remembered John 17 where Jesus prayed for His saints. Did God answer Jesus' prayer? Then I heard the voice of one of the children asking, "Daddy, why does Mommy want to die?" What does one tell a tearful child? Any words I could say would be inadequate. I felt God had abandoned me; disappeared without a trace. Painful emotions

clouded my thinking and I felt like I was in a cage of agonizing pain from which there was no escape. I knew that my wife and kids were in distress but I hardly knew how to handle my own needs, let alone theirs. Going to sleep at night was hell; I never knew the nights could be so dark and these dark nights of my soul never seemed to have a promise of sunrise. I would cry, "Where are you God?"

Reflective thoughts -

Did she really go from a happy wife and loving, doting mother to becoming a suicidal woman in a single day? At the time it certainly seemed that way to me. But now, as a counselor, I understand that there were numerous signals, which I failed to recognize. Furthermore, I must confess that she asked me many times to go to counseling with her and I was too stubborn to go. Yet, I question if counseling would have made any difference. When I finally did go, my counselor said "No." But had I gone, at least I would have been the kinder and gentler husband that she needed.

The question of "why?" must be one of the most crippling questions that ponders the human mind. When the most unimaginable events occur in one's life, it is probably one of the first questions to come to mind. The unanswered question can leave a mental vacuum and life becomes uneasy until the vacuum is filled. Unfortunately, it is a trite question. Most of the times, no one will ever know the answer. Furthermore, if you did know the answer, what difference would

it make? None! Therefore, it is a question for God to answer – if He chooses to. For now, life must go on, otherwise, the unanswered “why” will become an emotional and mental crippling agent. Isn’t it interesting that Jesus never mentioned the subject of unanswered prayers? He was always certain that prayers would be answered. Prayer is about what God wants, not what we want. Then our needs are mentioned. That is a good lesson to remember.

PART 2 *More Challenges*

In the next five years my wife spent some 450 days in five different mental health support institutions. Doctors tried everything from drugs to electric shock therapy. Because nothing worked, I was constantly fearful of someday finding her dead. In one year alone she destroyed four cars. Twice I picked her out of a bloodied bed and rushed her off to a hospital. Generally though, she was so heavily sedated that she was harmless. We sold the Corvette and purchased a camper, hoping that more family time together would work. It didn't. Occasionally, when her health improved, I thought my prayers were answered. However, my optimism was always followed by a greater disappointment. I couldn't understand why I had experienced such an incredible miracle of healing in 1974 and now life was total pain and chaos. That divine healing seemed like a distant dream. Didn't our family do everything right? Didn't we serve God as best as we could?

My Father Passed Away

Amidst the devastating turmoil in my life with my wife's illness, in August of 1984, my father passed away. This monumental loss of my wonderful dad appeared only as a small blimp on the emotional radar screen that reflected the continuous fiery darts of Satan at my family, and

at my wife in particular. I was thankful that in his last days I was able to pray the sinner's prayer with him and know that someday I will see him again.

Reflective thoughts -

I remember the days, when as a young child, I worked with my dad in his workshop building furniture. Other times we would be together working the family farm. I remembered the stories from his childhood, told in German, and how difficult life was after World War I. As an only child, I was blessed to be the recipient of their special love.

A song writer once wrote, "When the billows roll ... it is well with my soul." Well, the proverbial sea billows were rolling through my life causing great havoc, pain, and absolutely nothing was well with my soul. My confidence in God was being challenged and I looked more at the circumstances than to God. It would have been easy to say that God was the anchor of my life, but when days became weeks and weeks became months and months became years, I cried out "God, where are you?" Yet in my pain I knew He was there - somewhere - which compounded my problem: "God, if you are there (or here), why don't you do something?" Sometimes we don't get the answers we expect, but we get the answers we need. Again, as the song writer once said,

"Though Satan should buffet,

*Though trials should come,
Let this blest assurance control.
That Christ has regarded my
helpless estate,
And hath shed His own blood for
my soul.
... It is well with my soul"*

My Daughter Molested

While my businesses were successful, family problems overwhelmed me. Therefore, I employed a trusted family acquaintance, whom I shall call "Tom," to be my foreman. He quickly demonstrated that he was an answer to prayer and an incredible blessing. He was dependable, skilled in all phases of home construction, and made certain all work performed by subcontractors was quality and completed on time. He was definitely the kind of young man any employer wanted. It was hard to imagine how I had ever gotten along without him. However, after several months on the job, one day my neighbor informed me that Tom had molested his daughter, as well as mine the previous evening.

I was extremely angry and bitter and I could not imagine how my daughter felt. In my anger I prayed for peace and wisdom. The news stressed Christine so badly that she ended up in the hospital for another two weeks. I wanted to press charges with the police, but Christine insisted otherwise. I sent Tom back home to Illinois, but to this day I regret not calling the police. After he left I entered his apartment and was surprised at his huge collection of pornographic magazines. Who would ever have thought that this young man, a preacher's kid, who spent a year in Bible

college, would ever do such a thing? No matter what I tried to do, my personal life seemed to be falling apart. So I looked for a place where success could be found.

A New Restaurant

I had the opportunity to sell the restaurant and buy a larger, historic one. The financial records indicated that this was an opportunity not to be missed. I had always enjoyed the challenge of a business, as much, if not more, than the financial rewards. I still remember the day I stood along the side of this beautiful early 18th century inn, looked across the twelve-acre meadow with the stream, and thought what a blessing this restaurant would be. However, a voice inside clearly indicated that I was not to buy it. An internal argument ensued. How could this purchase not be a good investment? The financial numbers looked so good. In time, I realized that I should have listened. This was not a good decision.

Reflective thoughts -

All too often we blame the devil or others for our bad decisions. While those two influences certainly do enter everyone's life on occasion, confession of errors is as important as confession of sin. In this case, the financial numbers looked so good indicating it was an opportunity not to be missed. However, in time I realized that I should have listened to that inner voice. The restaurant turned into a financial disaster. Often it is not the weaknesses of a man that often brings him down, but his strengths. My strength was my demise,

and understanding this gives a depth of meaning to the phrase, “My strength is in the Lord” (Ps. 28:7; Isa. 12:2; Hab. 3:19).

My Dying Uncle

One day I received a phone call from my uncle in New York City asking me to visit him as soon as possible. We were not very close, but I went anyway, realizing the call was urgent. I quickly discovered that he was dying of cancer and, since I was next of kin, I had to take care of him. My life was filled with a chaotic paradox. My wife said she found a new freedom in her faith, but wanted to die, while my uncle was a committed atheist and wanted to live.

Once a week I drove a hundred miles to New York and visited him in his apartment or at Lennox Hill Hospital, then returned to see my wife in her hospital, and returned home late at night, after the kids had gone to bed by themselves. The hope that Christine might someday recover, come home, care for our children, and that we could once again have a semblance of normalcy as a family, was gone.

I would go in their rooms at night to bless them and wonder what their lives would become. Seeing the tears on their sleeping cheeks was more than I could handle. I cried out to God, “Where are you?” The pain was so great that I sensed no answer. This went on for months and then years. In the midst of pain, my spiritual sight was crippled and time became endless. Life felt so incredibly lonely and it seemed that nobody cared. Yet God was there. I just did not sense His presence.

When I blessed and prayed for my sleeping daughter, I remembered her missionary trip to Belize. I wondered if she would ever want to be in Christian service again. Or would the pain of life be too much for her? I wondered if my son Hans -- who preached his first sermon when he was only nine years old -- would want to follow the Lord's calling in his later years? Then there was Wilhelm who loved Matchbox cars and wanted to be an engineer. Would he make it? Finally, the youngest was Christian. He just wanted to be a kid and play. How could childhood innocence be taken from each of them through these tragic circumstances? How could God let this happen? But again, there was to be no response to my prayers.

Reflective thoughts -

If you ever swam in a river and for a moment wondered which way was up, then you realized the fear and concern one can have and how important it is not to panic. I hardly knew which way was up. On the outside I may have looked calm, but my spirit was nearly drowning in pain and frustration. In such times as these, one naturally tends to focus on the inward pain. But the children were also having their issues. The stability of a loving two-parent home, which they needed and Christine and I wanted to provide, was shattered. Everyone in the family had pain, confusion, and frustration.

It is in times as these, when heartache and loss appears to kill your soul, that we can

identify with the biblical figure by the name of Job. While I know I made some errors in judgment, Job suffered immensely even though he was an extremely wealthy and righteous man who honored God and was kind to others.

In this biblical narrative, the question readers are confronted with is, "Where is the justice of God when the innocent suffer?" The fact is that God is still God. While God is just, we live in an unjust world. We are free moral agents who have the opportunity to do what is right or what is wrong. Various decisions and actions we and others make influence our lives, sometimes to the point where we feel all is hopeless and only a dark future lies before us.

The Bible never promises anyone a rose garden. Persecution and hard times are promised for the believers. Yet God will never leave us or forsake us (Romans 8:18-39). At times He will deliver us from horrific events and other times He will be with us as we experience them.

In good times and bad, we are to praise God for who He is, God. We do not praise Him because of the difficulties, but for the fact that with Jesus we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:28). Even if we do not feel like we want to praise Him, like David, we may have to encourage ourselves to praise Him. We are not to make decisions according to our feelings, but to live by His

promises – that is, to apply God’s promises to our lives. That is called faith in action. The importance to keep a passionate focus on Jesus, rather than on our problems, cannot be overstated. Even if our problems are not as severe as what Job experienced, stressful events of a lower degree appear to be insurmountable when we are in the midst of them.

Eventually, after calm and peace are restored, we can look back with 20/20 hindsight and see where God intervened. As a result, we will become stronger believers who can help others with their challenges. They might be drowning in a river of problems and you can then share with them the life preservers of God’s promises. Oh how I now wish I had always lived that way!

Life was too Hard

One of those trips to New York was especially bad. After an exhausting day in the big dirty city I was on my way home and quickly got stuck in heavy traffic. After waiting and waiting and getting nowhere, I decided to park my car and take a walk. Life was a torment and I was ready to give up; I wanted to give up. Life simply was not worth all this pain and misery. I could see no way out. I was trapped. Suddenly the thought came to me that I could just have a fling with one of the sidewalk girls, jump in the nearby river, and that would end my torment. Death to my unending heartaches sounded so sweet and enticing. Whenever one is ready to give up, Satan is always there with an attractive answer and it

will always be destructive. I had not walked far and there was a teenage prostitute. We stood along the sidewalk and talked for a few minutes. She said she had been from a Christian family in Iowa, but she had run away because of the conflict and pain in her family. Immediately, her words pierced my heart. I thought of my Heidi and the boys at home. Then she looked at me and asked, "Are you a Christian?"

"No," I answered. "I was."

I could not believe what I had said! With those shameful words, I turned and walked to my car. Her words cut like a knife, but mine cut deeper. I repented of the incredible sin of denying my Lord. I wept bitterly. Even though I knew the Lord forgave me that night, it took ten years until I could share that horrendous event with anybody. It is one thing to read the biblical account of Peter and his denial of Jesus. It is another to experience a similar account and the loving redemption that followed. In spite of God's love, it was difficult for me to forgive myself.

Soon my uncle had improved in health and, since I had already moved his wife into one of my apartments in Pennsylvania, I was ready to move him also. The day I went to the hospital in New York City to get him, he died.

My Greatest Anger

In spite of everything that was going on, my real estate business grew. I took on a financial partner, who I shall refer to as "Jack." He had been introduced to me by his pastor because we had common business interests. We soon became

good friends. After several years, he was also my “shoulder to cry on,” during my wife’s suicide attempts.

Christine improved throughout 1988 and the following year. I looked forward to celebrating our 20th wedding anniversary in May of 1989. It was exciting to see her develop a fresh outlook on life even though we were miles apart theologically. I had faith that, in time, we could come together on these issues. We decided to spend a special weekend at a beautiful seaside resort. It was there Christine told me she was filing for divorce. Just when I was praising God for her healing, my life became hell all over again. Now chest pains added to the discomfort of a limp that had recently developed in my left leg.

The announcement of the pending divorce put Jack into a panic. I had trusted him and believed that he legally recorded all appropriate documents pertaining to our real estate matters in the county courthouse. However, much to my surprise, I discovered he had not done so. He was my closest friend and key financial partner. I believed his word was his bond, since he was also on the finance committee of his church, a position that required integrity and moral character. However, he had no desire to help me with my mentally ill wife or my children, but only to secure his financial gain. Since I had placed complete trust in him concerning finances, he quickly boxed me in, giving me no financial mobility to save my home and real estate investments.

One day I visited him, literally knelt before him on his garage floor, and begged him not to put me in bankruptcy. He laughed and asked for my antique train set (a childhood gift from my parents), since he was an avid train collector. I could not believe his change in character, yet I had foolishly ignored a warning sign. Jack had a quiet, but lucrative, hobby of collecting and selling rare trains on which he did not pay taxes. If he had been deceitful to the government, why would I expect him to be honest with me? I had chosen to be blind.

Eventually, Jack demanded usurious interest rates of 55 and 60 percent. Years later, in biblical studies, I learned that the Hebrew root word for “snakebite” is the same as for “usury.” Words cannot describe the hatred and bitterness I had for him. As a partner I had helped him earn hundreds of thousands of dollars. This man prided himself on his Christian faith, his position of “non-violence,” and his membership in a “peace” denomination, but he did not care that he was destroying a family home for his financial gain. My hatred grew so intense that one night I found myself in front of his house planning his murder. Only by the grace of God he is not dead and I am not sentenced to life in prison or on death row. Ironically, once again, those who became my worst enemies were the most esteemed members in the church.

I knew that my thoughts of hate and vengeance were wrong, yet my emotions were so strong that they consumed me. I could not sleep at night for I was tormented constantly by Jack’s greed for high interest rates, my childhood toy train, his

laughter, and the broken trust. I kept telling myself that I should have recognized the warning signs, but now it was too late, I was paying the penalty. In addition, he eventually demanded some of my properties at a “discounted price,” while the sales transaction stated real market value. In this manner he was able to sell the properties with little or no profit and thereby avoid income taxes. Since I was financially trapped, I had no choice but to agree with him. It was pure fraud and I wanted to kill him.

Dealing with Jack was my biggest spiritual struggle. It is trite to say that I needed to forgive him. I felt so violated that words fail. Anger that grows to hatred and then bitterness is a prolonged manner of emotional and spiritual suicide. Day in and day out I would find myself cursing him, only to repent later. I had determined to forgive him, regardless of how I felt. There are no words that can express my difficulty in forgiving this church treasurer. The healing process did not take months, but years. In 1974 my healing had come quickly -- instantly, but this healing was a long and arduous process -- very long. Eventually, I was healed from anger and bitterness toward him because I continuously asked God to forgive and bless both of us. In the process, my emotions and attitudes were also healed by the unfathomable love, mercy, and healing grace of Almighty God. From this experience, I could have written a book on why one must not be a Christian, but I chose to write about Jesus.

Reflective thoughts -

Just because you have an enjoyable working relationship with someone does not

mean he or she is a friend. We mistake compatibility and common goals for friendship. While these may be elements of friendship, the underlying element of friendship is whether one cares for the other's best welfare. To "like someone" might be trivial friendship, the first step of becoming true and close friends. True friendship takes time to build. Proverbs 4:23 says, *"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life."*

In an increasingly technological world, true friendships are rare. Friendship means identity in thought, heart, and spirit. A close friendship and relationship with one's spouse is a microcosm of the love relationship we are to have with Jesus. All too often we receive His blessings and know of Him, but do not know Him personally. It is His greatest joy when someone wants to come closer to Him.

Sooner or later we all feel the hurt and disappointment of someone we respected, loved, or trusted who betrayed us. Anger may burn within, but even if it is justified, we are to forgive. To forgive is not to say that the event never happened, but only that you will not hold a particular charge against him or her. Neither does forgiveness mean that legal consequences will be avoided. It means that you ask God not to judge him or her, but, rather, you have chosen to pray God's blessing upon the violator instead. The word "blessing" in this context could mean salvation, peace,

or any number of things the person desperately needs from God.

The process of praying for someone like that is very difficult. It is a matter of praying against your emotions and everything you feel, especially if the violation suffered is severe. You may feel like a hypocrite praying for forgiveness when, in fact, you might want to strangle that person. This kind of prayer is truly a sacrifice of the highest degree, because you struggle to transform your mind to conform to God's will, even though your emotions tell you otherwise (Rom. 12:1-2). Forgiving people who have hurt you is your gift to them. Forgetting those people who have hurt you is your gift to you. In time, the forgiving emotions will develop. It may not be easy or quick, but at the end, you will be blessed.

God does not make anyone think or act like Jesus did. We must choose to do so ourselves. Our ideas, thoughts, prayers and actions should conform to the obedience of God. This is how our human nature or character is transformed into the image (divine nature or character) of God.

PART 3 My World Implodes, but there is Hope

By the summer of 1990 the divorce was complete, my ex-wife had moved out and I was trying to maintain a home for the kids as long as I could. They too were under heavy stress, much of which was caused by my mistakes and my emotions that were ready to come to the surface at a moment's notice. Chest pains were developing and I feared a heart attack. However, my doctor said the chest pains were stress related and that I needed to release everything and concentrate on survival. The news did not seem to help. The bankruptcy was coming upon me like a massive dark cloud and it was evident that everything would soon be lost. The only winner was Jack. The family farm -- a 1732 log and stone farmhouse, along with some 36 other properties, were eventually lost. Everything that my parents and I had ever worked for -- gone.

Yet, I had to be honest with myself. As the cliché says, “decisions determine destiny,” and my loss was the result of my decisions. Jack was not the only reason – I should never have purchased the second restaurant and I never should have trusted him. Yet, even if I had not purchased it, everything would probably have gone south.

My blood pressure was sky high. My attorney and I discussed a possible lawsuit. However, I had trouble dealing with the issue of taking another brother of the faith to court. Two pastors I respected advised me that Jack was by no means a brother, as proven by the “fruit” of his life. However, I decided to try to settle the matter in a biblical manner. I went to him privately and asked him to do what was right. With a micro-cassette recorder hidden in my pocket, I taped three conversations and every time Jack admitted that what he was doing to me was wrong, but said that he had to protect his investment.

Still, we agreed to try to resolve our differences in a biblical manner. Since a private conversation between us did not produce results, we asked several respected members of the church to gather to be the judges. However, Jack’s story to them in public was quite different. All of these men were from a traditional “peace” denomination, which preached non-violence and no military service. They recognized the conflict between Jack and me, yet refused to make a decision involving conflict. What irony! Finally, I decided to file a lawsuit.

I gave my attorney all the necessary documents and the tape recordings concerning our real

estate projects. He would have been delighted to take the case to court with his only fee being a percentage of the final award. However, as a friend and true professional, he said that such a trial would be far more stressful than what I already was experiencing. He questioned if it really would be in my best interest to proceed. He had a heartfelt concern for me. Furthermore, my tape recordings violated federal wiretap laws and, hence, could not be used as evidence in court. Using them as evidence could have landed me in prison. This frustrated me even more, as these clear confessions would obviously prove my case. While the lawsuit was winnable without use of the tape recordings, I accepted his counsel, dropped the matter, and destroyed the tapes.

Reflective thoughts -

Trying to resolve issues according to biblical instruction may not produce the desired results, but it is still the right way. It has been said that we must never look for justice. How can there be true justice in a fallen world? Try as we will, we are all human and subject to human frailties; we are all sinners saved by the Grace of God.

The test of spirituality occurs when we are faced with injustice, persecution, meanness, or ungratefulness. The test seems to be intensified when such attitudes and actions come from others within our family or church.

Only God has true knowledge of each of us. Human judgments are not based on facts, but, more often, on ideas that may or may

not be factual. For that reason, when called to make judgment, it is imperative that the judgment meted out is the same as what we would desire to be placed upon us.

Jesus knew the weaknesses of His disciples and those to whom He ministered. When He was betrayed, He did not get angry or cynical and He certainly did not plot some scheme for late night revenge. In this fallen and sin-ravaged world, we are never to expect true justice, but should always be willing to give justice to the best of our ability.

Time to check out

Life for me was in constant tension, but I tried to make it as pleasant as possible for the kids. On one bright sunny day I called the kids to come in for supper and discovered Heidi had run away. I could not believe it. How could she do this? No one seemed to know where she was. I could only think of the girl I met in New York who was a runaway, the prostitute who by this time most certainly may have been murdered or died of AIDS. Now daddy's little girl was gone. The one who had been violated, whom I failed to protect, was now a run-away.

I could not help but wonder if she was also walking the streets of New York. I wondered how she felt, what was her pain like? Thoughts and dreams for her had become a nightmare. My life felt incredibly desolate, I felt I was so estranged from God that I did not even know how to proceed. I wished I could simply melt away and disappear. The pain suddenly became

excruciating. The days had become as dark as the nights again.

I went into my office and cried. "God! Where are you? Why do I have all this hell in my life? Jesus, if you love me, why am I hurting so badly?" That joyful childhood hymn now seemed like a hollow hope. I could take it no longer - the pain was too great. I just knew God did not answer my prayers anymore. He didn't care; it was time to check out. I loaded my semi-automatic and prayed what I thought would be my last prayer. I told God, "I tried my best and failed, forgive me and take care of the kids." Just when I said "Amen," the phone rang. I picked it up and at the other end was an old business acquaintance with whom I had not spoken for six or eight months. The voice said, *"Hi Bill, this is Robin. I remembered that you are going through some pretty tough times and I thought I'd call you to give you some encouragement. Hang in there; you'll do ok."*

With that I hung up the phone and cried. "Yes Lord, You still do answer prayers." That was the last I ever heard from her. To this day she most certainly does not know the divine appointment of her phone call. That day I asked the Lord to take care of my Heidi and my boys, lift my heavy load of depression, and restore to me joy. I discovered later that Heidi moved only a couple of miles from home to live with one of her friends. Within a few months the Lord lifted my pain and depression and, by the grace of God, we survived. I knew that God had a special plan for me and, while I had no goals or vision, I asked Him to reveal His plan.

While these were difficult times, I was blessed with godly counseling from a pastor-friend. He had previously also counseled my wife and told me that she had been suicidal at the age of nine, because of her extremely harsh, fundamentalist, and emotionally cold father. What a strange irony. Her father was also a preacher, but failed to show the tender love of God to any of his seven children. I was told that she had deep bitterness against her father and that anger was eventually transferred to me. In effect, she was a divorce and nervous break-down waiting to happen.

Reflective thoughts -

Regardless of how long you have been in a faith-walk with Jesus, there had to be times when you wondered why God didn't answer your prayer. We all have those kind of moments and they seem to come at the worst possible times. Certainly God cares for our needs, feelings, and desires. But He also desires that we desire Him and that we are concerned about His desires. Many people pray for materialistic comforts of various kinds (see Jer. 45:5), rather than for a close relationship with God and for the needs of others. Matthew 6:33 places things in proper perspective. Jesus is saying that He is to be placed first in everyone's life and other people and issues are to be secondary. One of the biggest entrapments of Western Christianity is the belief that following God is a sure way to find success - as we define it in our Western materialistic culture. Our definition of

success often fails to equate to God's definition of success.

To seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness is totally opposite of how we normally think. The purpose of prayer is not so much to get answers from God, but that we come to the point where we can discern the mind of God, as revealed in John 17:20-21: *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* With the goal to discern the mind of God, pray until something happens.

If we took the American pop culture out of American Christianity, how much would be left? That question may be rather meaningless until it is personalized. As someone once said,

*I believe in the sun even when it isn't
shining,
I believe in love even when I am
alone
I believe in God even when He is
silent.*
- Unknown

I phoned the police, but they suggested that Heidi probably ran off to live with a friend. A few days later I discovered the police were correct in their assessment. It was amazing to learn that strangers knew

more of her than did I. It was frustrating that life at home was so chaotic that she had to leave to find peace and security, but at least she was safe.

Homeless and in Street Ministry

Soon the bankruptcy was over. The children, now teenagers, went to live with their mother, who was off medication because her health was improving. She did her best to be a good mother under extremely difficult circumstances. I do not know how she survived those years, other than God was working in her life. I will always be grateful for her heroic attempts to be a loving mother, while I ended up being homeless. At night she stayed awake, worrying that they would become homeless and during the day she went to therapy, doctors, and support groups, so she would be able to take care of herself and the kids. Life was extremely difficult for everyone. The fact that all of us survived and became stronger is proof that God is with us during our most trying times.

In prior years, I had supported Coffeehouse Ministries, a street ministry in Allentown, Pennsylvania, a typical small American city. Little did I realize during my initial involvement that one day this ministry would be my home. It was better than living in my car and working there in the ministry opened my eyes to the needs of those in the inner city. During this time it also seemed impossible for me to find a job. The economic recession of the early 1990s had hit Allentown especially hard, so I took whatever job could be found. When there was no work, welfare was my only option.

One of those jobs was cleaning the kitchens at Dorney Park, an amusement park near Allentown, between the hours of 11:00 at night and 2:00 in the morning. I was thankful for any job. Seldom did I mention that I had three college degrees in fear of being turned down because I was “over qualified.” I drifted from one low-paying job to another, as if some dark cloud was over me from which there was no escape. When there was no work I was on welfare and food stamps. I even sold my blood plasma for a few dollars. Life was seemed hopeless and difficult.



A 1992 courtesy ticket, given to me by my manager at Dorney Park, is kept as a reminder from where the Lord has brought me.

Then one day I had a second significant dream, almost as radical as the first. In this dream or vision I saw a picture of hundreds of people standing on a flat plain with dark storm clouds hanging over them. Every person was standing still, almost as in military style, and holding a candle. Most of the people looked extremely sad and depressed and their candles had been extinguished. What frightened me was when I recognized the depressed expressions on my children's faces. I realized that every one of their candles was blown out. That dream changed my prayer life for them. I realized they needed me to encourage and pray for them.

I continued to be a volunteer counselor at the Compass Coffeehouse Ministries, counseling alcohol and drug addicts, prostitutes, and whoever else walked in and needed help. My only pay was a low-rent room in a warehouse and donated food and seeing the people who came in for help. It was astounding to see so much misery. I was not alone with my problems. The poor were especially vulnerable because they had fewer financial resources with which to explore options or opportunities for a better life. I was wondering if this treadmill of life would ever end.

Finally, after two years I was hired by a mortgage refinance office. Success came quickly as I went from \$0 commission to nearly \$6,000 per month in only twelve weeks; the second top producer in the office. I was ecstatic! I could hardly believe that such good fortune was upon me. Now I could finally help support the kids and pay off old

debts. However, just when I was about to receive my first check, my employer informed me that, if I told a “little white lie” about the client’s credit history, my income would more than double. I was to say that there was a credit problem, but I could “fix” it for only a quarter of one percent rise in their interest rate. I could also falsify federal tax returns to qualify applicants (a primary reason for the mortgage failures that began around 2008).

Many mortgage brokers at the time were earning six-figure incomes and now I knew how they did it. I was between dire poverty and an effluent income, but I refused to lie to my clients. I had been the recipient of accusations previously and there was no way I was going to jeopardize myself again. Hence, I was fired and back on welfare again. As much as this experience hurt, I never regretted my decision. (A few years later the business went bankrupt.)

I inquired into various teaching opportunities, but since college graduates were routinely hired at the starting salary, there was almost no hope of returning to education. This was due to a state law that required public schools to recognize the experience and degrees, for salary purposes, of teachers considered for employment. Private schools seldom offered courses in my field – industrial technology and design, so there was no opportunity for teaching in a Christian school.

Reflective thoughts -

God permits difficulties to enter our lives in order to see how we will respond. Some choose to respond their own way and others call upon Him in their time of need.

Watching God respond not only builds our faith, but affords the opportunity to have God manifest Himself in our lives. In fact, the only aim of life is that Jesus may be manifested in each one of us.

I was experiencing the results of my own bad decisions. It would have been better if I had never opened a restaurant and better yet if I didn't have Jack as a partner. Those bad decisions not only affected me, but my ex-wife and children were also suffering. It was depressing.

We all feel we have a rather accurate perception of ourselves. Even if we acknowledge that the image may not be perfect, we feel we have a fairly accurate understanding of self, knowing what we can and cannot do. Facing the truth can be traumatic. The problem arises when we have "practical" or "applied" faith in Jesus, then we wonder *if* He will do what His Word said He will do. It begins with a matter of focus – we need to be focused on our Creator. The prophet Isaiah said that, "*You (God) will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you*" (Isa. 26:3).

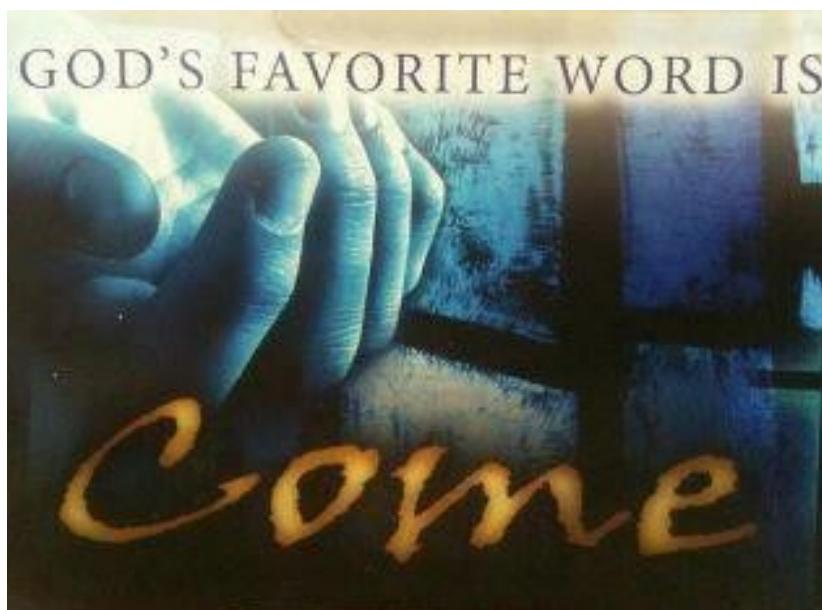
Self-deceptions, when dealt with, hurt. When the Word of God challenges self-proclaimed imaginations, there is usually pain and suffering in the healing process. In essence, it is not always easy to deal with issues, but it is better than not dealing with them at all. The core issue is that sin

deadens feelings. Ask our Lord a question about yourself. He may answer with a question about you. His questions revealed me to me. He may also ask you questions about Himself. Only when one perceives the righteousness of the Almighty, does he understand how impure he really is. The appropriate response begins with confession. Forgiveness, which causes divine joy, will follow. But a word of caution here. The answer might not be from God, but a response from your emotions, because we all like to hear what we want to hear. Ask for the gift of discernment.

The test of spiritual concentration is taking control of your imagination. Whatever you focus on the most, if your thoughts are not on Jesus, you have an idol. Perhaps it is your job, another person, or service. If there is a constant 24/7, month after month, imagination on anything else other than Jesus, then you have an idol. God gave us the gift of imagination for a purpose – that is to keep our minds (imagination) focused on Him. But first we must come to Him.

The whole matter of recovery from such a huge collection of losses takes two: you and Jesus. Every one of us has to put forth continuous effort. It is easy to say that we must have eagle's wings to be victorious. The prophet Isaiah said that *"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk*

and not be faint.” But the life of faith is usually is a steady life of walking and not fainting. That walk may seem to be long, lonely, endless, lifeless, and maybe a useless journey, but at the end there is a blessing – your flight of an eagle. Jesus never asked us to be spiritual, but to be obedient. Then one becomes spiritual. But first, come back to Jesus.



God's favorite word is "Come."

The Challenge of Cancer

In the spring of 1994, I was employed to start a new mortgage company and immediately the business was off to a good start, far more than I could handle. Life was finally beginning to turn around for me and I saw nothing but an exciting future. However, hardly a few months had gone

by when I had a car accident. It was my first in nearly 25 years and, to make matters worse, it was my fault. How embarrassing! Even though I had not been injured, I visited a doctor because I was stiff and sore. He confirmed that there were no injuries from the accident. However, what he said next stunned me. "You have a massive tumor," he informed me. "You will need immediate surgery. Without the surgery, you have probably only five or six months to live." My mind struggled to process this sudden unforeseen revelation. How could this be?

Up until this time, friends had been teasing me about losing some weight because I had a midriff bulge. It turned out, my so-called "weight" was really a massive chondrosarcoma tumor (16 cm. / 6 ¼ inch). It had pushed my organs up and over my belt, creating the appearance of being overweight. It had already destroyed a major portion of the left hip and doctors could not understand how I was still walking. In fact, the tumor was ready to burst. After all that I had gone through; just when life seemed to be returning to me, I could not believe this was happening.

Surgery was not an option, but a requirement, if there was to be any hope of survival. Doctors insisted that I never again take another step without crutches. My left hip was extremely fragile and could break momentarily, which, in turn, would cause the tumor sac to break. Were that to happen, the cancer would spread and terminate my life in a matter of weeks. I prayed for healing, remembering the life-changing event of 1974. Doctors said they would probably have

to remove the entire left hip which would result in the loss of my left leg. Such an operation does not come with the promise of seeing another sunrise in a day or two. I prepared myself for the worst.

Prior to surgery, I asked for forgiveness from everyone who had been hurt as the result of my bankruptcy and divorce; especially from Christine and Jack. I did not want anything to impede the healing hand of God. Jack also asked for forgiveness, but added that he did no wrong. His comments, however, were fine with me. True forgiveness is unconditional and one must let go of past things and let God take control. I prayed that God would bless him (see Job 42:10). In the midst of this crisis I had a deep inner peace. Ever since I had received that phone call from Robin there had been a strong steadiness because I knew that God heard my prayers, even if there seemed to be no response. The irony is that, without the embarrassing car accident, the cancer would not have been discovered and I would have died. I experienced more miracles than I had realized, including some events that were not immediately seen as “miracles.”

The tumor was so big that part of it wrapped around and through my spinal column, which further complicated the surgery. Therefore, on November 3, 1994, the day of surgery, the questions doctors grappled with were “Do we cut this guy in half to save his life? Or do we let him have a right leg, limited quality of life, and risk a potential recurrence of cancer?” This was no ordinary cancer, but a rare cartilage cancer. The number of known adult survivors is so few that

they are statically insignificant. Some medical books denied any survivors at all. Even now, nearly twenty years later, chondrosarcoma is totally resistant to chemotherapy. Yet, compared to all the family and business problems I experienced, this was a picnic. The Lord gave me an incredible peace, abundant joy, and a quick recovery. God chose not to save me from the first of several surgeries, but performed one miracle after another as the cancer returned three times. The radical surgery took my left leg, left hip, and a third of my tail bone, but it saved my life. I was scheduled to be in the hospital for more than a month, including physical therapy. Yet incredibly, I drove home two weeks and six days later, the day before Thanksgiving.

It was impossible to remove all the cancer cells without cutting the spinal cord and, therefore, it was necessary to undergo seven weeks of daily radiation therapy. This had a host of miserable side-effects. Again I prayed and, with the strong support of my church, we expected God to perform a profound miracle -- and He did! There was never a day of sickness, tiredness, or nausea! Doctors insisted that I not return to work, but recover peacefully in my apartment. However, I was blessed with so much energy; I took an evangelism class -- something I had always wanted to do. It was on the second day of class that the Lord called me to the teaching ministry. My life was about to see a radical transformation.

I was immediately faced with the challenge of learning basic life functions without a leg. I painfully discovered that common functions could

be extremely dangerous, such as walking across a floor that was unexpectedly wet. I also experienced the pain of falling down stairs. Life took on a totally new defensive perspective with a greater dependence upon God. I never knew what tomorrow would bring, but I knew the One who held each tomorrow. No longer would I be able to teach industrial technology in high school, build houses, own a restaurant, or develop real estate. All the forms of employment I had ever considered interesting or challenging were now all but impossible to pursue. Yet in my heart of hearts I knew that the Lord had a special plan for me. Jeremiah 29:11-14a says,

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord.

Reflective thoughts -

Once you look at death a few times and realize that you are alive only by the grace of God, you will have a new appreciation for every sunrise, and every day will have a passionate meaning. For me, I deeply know that God has extended my life for His purpose. I dare not waste a day. I knew that whatever calling or ministry would be in my future, somehow it would be related to evangelism and archaeology. I was certain that God would move me in some direction related to one or both of these areas. Since

then, God closed some doors and opened others.

Each day we go as our Lord leads. His plan for our lives is usually revealed as we go along life's journey. It's called a "faith walk." At times He gives specific directives. Sometimes He doesn't. Such is the life of prayer and faith. But never move until you have received inner peace concerning your decisions and plans.

Our primary goal is to be in a close relationship with our Savior. All too often we replace that with the idea we must "do" something for Him. Once we are close to Him, His plans for our lives begin to unfold. The writer of Proverbs says, *"In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps"* (Proverbs 16:9) and later says *"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails"* (Proverbs 19:21).

It has been said that one cannot turn a ship that isn't moving. Likewise, it is difficult for God to direct a person, who may be seeking, but is not moving (or doing). When plans change unexpectedly, do not consider yourself or the plans to be a failure. God is simply turning your ship.

Study and Ministry Begin

In September 1995 I entered Valley Forge Christian College for undergraduate Bible studies. I then earned double master's degrees at Lancaster Bible College, followed by a doctorate

at Oral Roberts University by 2008. This is considered nearly impossible for someone who failed first grade, nearly two other grades, and who had not been accepted into a college preparatory program. I felt I should study for a future in teaching, as well as in counseling or ministry. During this time of preparing for the ministry, which required endless hours of study, God was also healing my mind and emotions. Little did I know that He would give me the privilege to study and teach in Israel.

In 1997, I established *Evidence of Truth Ministries*, a research and teaching ministry that in 2004 became a non-profit corporation. The primary purpose is, *“To teach the reality of Jesus... to reliable men [and women] who will also be qualified to teach others”* (2 Tim. 2:2). To teach the Scriptures as the infallible, inspired, and inerrant Word of God became a passion. The older I get the more I realize the damage that has occurred to families and Western culture as churches drift away from the truth of the Bible. The irony is that true believers do not need evidence to believe the Bible and true unbelievers refuse to even consider relevant truth. Yet there are so many in the middle, especially among young adults, who want to know why they should hold dear to the biblical precepts when the culture has so many enticing invitations. The answer is that God’s eternal Word will stand and all else will be burned up.

I visualized Peter and Jesus on the Water

In the summer of 1998 I went to Israel on an archaeological dig and tour. While on the tour I had the opportunity to stay at Kibbutz Ein Gev,

along the southeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee. There, on a sunset evening, I stood beneath a grove of trees and looked out upon the waters where I visualized Jesus walking on the water toward a boat. Then, in my mind's eye, I saw Peter was coming out of the boat and walking toward Jesus. Suddenly Peter was beginning to sink and was up to his neck in water, almost drowning, when Jesus reached out and pulled him up. Then, just as Jesus gave Peter a hug, Peter looked toward me and I saw my face on him. This vision was burned into my soul. Just as Jesus had saved Peter from drowning, Jesus had also saved me from the waters of despair. As I wept I made the decision that, no matter what would come upon my life, I would always follow Him.

As I looked over the waters I began to understand that His plans for me were far greater than I ever imagined. Again I quote the prophet Jeremiah,

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord" (Jer. 29:11-14a).

The Lord gave a similar word to us through the prophet Habakkuk, *Look at the nations and watch - and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.* (Hab. 1:5). Never in my life had I ever imagined that I would be a

blessing to foreign pastors and teachers as a Bible teacher and professor. Yet, beginning in the summer of 2000 and for several years thereafter, I was privileged to teach in Israel, Jordan, and Nigeria; then in Pennsylvania.

Reflective thoughts -

Life is a gift from God, what you do with it is your gift to God. Every person of significance mentioned in the Bible was at one time or another broken before God could use them for an incredible task. If you are at a point of brokenness, at the bottom of life, then rejoice because the Lord is preparing you for a special work that could very well be beyond your wildest imagination. Out of suffering come the strongest souls. God's wounded often make His best soldiers.

Looking back to my teenage years, what a blessing it is to have grown up without getting involved with drugs, alcohol, sex, and the many other vices common among teens today. If I had been involved in any of those, the destructive pressures upon my life at this time would have been far greater.

It is amazing how ignorant we are of ourselves. Or maybe it would be better said that it is amazing how defensive we are about not dealing with particular personal issues. Whether it is pride or fear of dealing with the pain of past events, there are issues that need to be resolved. Only God truly understands us. Yet until one decides

to resolve the matter of pride, the pain of past events, or whatever the compassionate hand of God is restricted from making us whole.

PART 4 Another Cancer Challenge, then Ministry Begins

The ordeal with cancer was not over with the 1994 surgery. Friends and family continued to pray for my healing while the life-threatening health challenge continued. Several times doctors suspected the return of the dreaded chondrosarcoma. Often they were proven wrong. Yet three times they were right and lung surgeries were required to remove cancer growths. In the first lung surgery in 1999 I lost the upper lobe of one lung and parts of the other. Later, in the spring semester of 2001, two more lung surgeries were needed. Amazingly, the last two surgeries were performed on Mondays and I never missed the class on the following Thursday. The Lord chose not to give me a healing miracle, but miraculous recoveries.

In the summer of 2001 I returned to Israel to work on two research projects. Upon my return home I returned to the medical center for a regularly

scheduled chest x-ray and CAT scan. Nodules were again discovered in both lungs and doctors were unsure as to what to do. I had so much lung tissue removed previously, and now nodules were everywhere. They tried to be kind about the lack of options. So they scheduled me for another visit three months later, at which time they would determine if they could do anything.

In the meantime, I returned to my church where a number of people prayed for me, as they had done many times previously. There were no “bells or whistles” or special feelings, but the next medical check-up revealed that all of the suspected nodules were gone.

Reflective thoughts -

All too many Christians believe that the Christian life means deliverance from difficulties and troubles. And at times God, by His divine grace, does deliver us from such heartaches. However, more likely than not, Christians find themselves in trouble. In John 16:33, Jesus said, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* Not only are troubles promised, so is persecution – a thought seldom discussed in Western nations today. Nonetheless, God did not come to give us a comfortable life, but He came that we could overcome difficulties through the love, grace, and power of the Holy Spirit. It is the kingdom of God functioning within us that is a witness of Jesus to others that they too might come to Him.

Difficulties produce incredible pressures and tribulation, which may be stressful and cause

strain. Body builders used to say that where there is no pain, there is no gain. Likewise, in the kingdom of God, where there is no strain, no strength in Jesus is attained. Difficulties are the tests that develop spiritual maturity. The key to life is to keep a passionate focus on Jesus, and know that this life is merely a time of determining where eternity will be spent.



Jesus: He is the key to life

Overseas Ministry

Years earlier, Bible college professors had discouraged me from the ministry. Now the Lord was not only leading me into ministry, but also to become a short-term visiting professor to foreign seminary students and pastors. What an

incredible joy! Words simply cannot express what Jesus was doing in and through me.

While studying in Israel and Jordan in 1998 and 1999, I was offered the opportunity to return as a visiting adjunct professor. This was a dream come true and my prayerful thoughts returned to my Sunday school teacher – Milton Keeler. In the summer of 2000, I taught at the Galilee Bible College, where I had a class of Russian Jews who had returned to the land of their fathers and were studying to become pastors in their churches. I also had a class of Palestinian pastors from northern Israel and the ancient land of Samaria. Shortly thereafter, I taught at the Jordan Evangelical Theological Seminary in Amman, Jordan. As these students came into perspective, I realized what Jesus said in Acts 1:8 “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,” was exactly in the same pattern I was teaching. What an interesting confirmation! I have been blessed to teach many other pastors in many nations since then; and to think that twice I was ready to end it all.

On June 3, 2001, I was blessed with an honored occasion. I was invited to my home church to give my testimony. Years ago I thought it would be an honor to preach the goodness of God, yet never thought in my wildest dreams I would see that day. When you become a God chaser and look for opportunities to serve Him, it is amazing where He will take you.

Who am I that I should have such a privileged ministry? How wonderful is our Lord! He picked

me up off the streets of New York, where I denied Him. He guided me through the quagmire of emotional pain, when I thought He was nowhere to be found. All the time I thought I was alone, He was actually just behind me. My pain was so great that I did not see Him. Yet, He was there all the time. How awesome He is. My faith in Christ Jesus is not a cheap antiseptic to deaden the pain of life - but a vibrant relationship that has brought excitement and abundant joy to my life. I am clothed in His Word, I have the oil of His Spirit, I have the joy of life, and every day I live in His house. Where ever you are in life today, whatever your hardship, do not give up for you do not know what incredible plans God has for your life.

Someone Special

As stated previously, in the summer of 2001, I was in Jerusalem working on two research projects. One was the historical and cultural background of the ministry environment of Jesus and the second was a master's thesis on how the philosophy and theology of the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem was applied throughout Israel.

At that time I met a Finnish "missionary," who had spent ten years caring for Holocaust survivors and volunteering in various ministries. Her name was Paivi Eskeli, which means "the day of Ezekiel." We established a wonderful friendship and worked together on my biblical research projects. The Lord had given us a common calling, vision, and ministry. A year later we planned our future together as we felt God was calling us to be a ministry team. However, I told her that, before we begin our lives together,

there is a special grove of trees along the Sea of Galilee I needed to show her.

During our courtship I had a crazy idea. Wouldn't it be wonderful if her family could come down from Finland and mine come over from the States, and we could tour this wonderful land and have a beautiful sunset wedding along the Sea of Galilee? It was a dream of dreams as she barely had two shekels to rub together and I was on Social Security Disability. Yet Jesus answered my prayer in a most dynamic way.

From August 9 to the 19th, 2003, we took our families and some friends on a tour throughout Israel. We showed them where Jesus walked, where He healed the sick, where He raised the dead, and helped them understand the Scriptures in a new light. Then, on August 17, we gathered under some trees on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee. There was a refreshing breeze and in the late afternoon sun a million glitters reflected from the wave caps, when I looked out upon the waters and thought of the time I had stood there five years earlier and marveled at the mercy of God. When I turned around, there were the most beautiful feet that had ever touched earth. There was my Paivi and she came to stand beside me. There she became my wife and I, her husband. Together, as we looked across the waters where Jesus had once pulled Peter to safety, we dedicated our lives to each other and to minister His word to the nations. No price would be too great or sacrifice too costly to keep us from serving Jesus, who not only saved us but gave us life, joy, and eternal significance.



Bill and Paivi's wedding along the Sea of Galilee on August 17, 2003, is a testimony to the grace and love of our Lord and the realization of Jeremiah 29:11, in the most touching and meaningful way.

Together in Ministry

We live in a world where Christians are continually challenged concerning the truth of Scripture; this is not only true in America, but worldwide. While we have held seminars in various churches, Jesus has also opened doors to foreign countries as well.

Some people think a foreign teaching ministry is a joyful "touristy" type ministry. This is hardly the case, especially on one leg. In Nigeria we endured walking difficulties, oppressive heat, mosquitoes, stomach problems, and threats of security. While these conditions are bad enough, traveling with a severe handicap makes these

struggles all the more difficult. Yet, the pastors and teachers in these communities live daily in these conditions and are overjoyed to see someone come and tell them about Jesus.



Bill and Paivi prepare to enter a community church with pastors Jonathan and Gloria Magi in Nigeria in 2004.

Pastors and teachers in third world nations do not have access to Bible colleges or in-depth teaching resources, which are taken for granted in the West. Computers and the Internet are expensive. It is a blessing and honor to help them build a closer relationship with our Jesus, so they may be more effective in ministering to their people. What better way is there to serve our Lord?

Hearing the voice of God can, at times, be a bit challenging. Throughout the years of study I felt led to prepare for careers in both academia and ministry/counseling. To whatever calling God desires to send us, Paivi and I are willing to go.

When in the midst of severe problems, one naturally looks either inward or is overly attentive to the problem. One hardly looks to God, to His promises, or any other possible solutions. Yet the words of Jeremiah 29:11 are profoundly true:

“‘For I know the plans that I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.’”

I think back to 1992 or '93, when, at times, I had no bed other than my car. If you would have knocked on my car window to wake me up and say that one day I would study in Israel, get married in Israel, and teach pastors in other countries, I would have suggested that you go take a drug test. Yet that is precisely what happened. God, in His loving grace and mercy has taken me far beyond what I ever could have thought of or imagined. Today Paivi and I are blessed to present seminars in churches and encourage the body of Christ to grow in Jesus and prepare for the day when we shall kneel before His heavenly throne.

As to my four wonderful children – the divorce and loss of their home was devastating to them. It is only by the grace of God that not one went off the deep end into alcohol or drug abuse. Any counselor will say that, while there are still some

lingering issues to be resolved, they are doing incredibly well.

There is a tendency to write what readers want to read – they lived happily ever after. This is seldom the case. Time doesn't heal, but it makes the hurt bearable; Jesus heals. The plain and simple truth is that there will always be a work that Jesus still needs to do in each of us. Cancer and divorce are incredibly painful and destructive events and, yes, there is healing afterwards as one draws closer to Jesus. He desires you to be healed of your debilitating challenges, to see you live in the fullness of life, and expand the Kingdom of God upon this earth.

What is so amazing is that our Lord is no respecter of persons—He has no favorites. He has a plan for you, just as he has for me and everyone else on the face of this earth. It is easy to say that all you have to do is to put your trust in Jesus. I know, at times, it is very difficult to do. It is easy to give up and sometimes it seems like it is the only way out. But it isn't. The Bible never promises to take us out of all problems. We are delivered from some and go through others. But regardless, we never go through them alone.

Feel free to share this story with someone you know who is going through difficult times. No matter how bad life may appear to be, there is always Jesus who will help carry you through. Jeremiah 29:11 is as true today as it was before the foundations of the earth were laid. Likewise, as St. Augustine once said, "Jesus died for every one of us, as if there was only one of us."

The difficulty of presenting this story is the passage found in James 4:11 *Speak not evil against one another*. A number of details have been omitted simply because these could be interpreted as speaking evil against someone. Speaking ill of anyone is motivated by anger or bitterness. I have no anger or bitterness, but I do have pity and empathy.

In the course of time I have met many others who have experienced difficulties. Every one of them thought he or she was the only one suffering to that degree. The truth is that all humanity groans under the weight of sin and poor decisions. This testimony is shared so you and many others will not only come to faith in Christ Jesus, but will become passionate about Him as well.

This testimony is one of many testimonies of the power of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of believers, who have struggles and are imperfect, yet have a desire (most of the time) to do the will of God. Hence, the Apostle John said that there is power in our testimony (Rev. 12:11) – the power of Jesus Christ. That same power is available for you as a believer.

Reflective thoughts -

I have two points to consider. First, what does it gain a man if he wins the whole world and loses his family? Divorce is the sin that has lasting negative effects, especially on children. If you survived a broken relationship, it might be wise to ask what two or three things you should have done differently; or what two or three

things should you have done, but didn't do. The purpose is not to justify actions, but to open the opportunity to bring healing dialog to children who may not know how to deal with the issues that continue to cause pain.

Second, over the years I have heard several confessions of faith that I believe are vital to one's spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. These are so true, because the core essence of life is to be transformed into the image of God by His Word (the Bible) and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Part 5 Conclusion and Confessions of Faith

What can be said about life's journey? As difficult as it may seem to be, not all of the events have been included in this testimonial. For example, there was a fire in a rental home I owned which took the life of a 2-year old child and a business transaction with a pastor who became considerably less than honest. I could write a book on why one does not want to become a Christian, but instead I wrote about Jesus. Some have said it is the most exhaustive study on the life of Christ they have ever read. That is a fine compliment and I hope others will grow in their faith and understanding because of it. However, the most important point of my life and this story is that Jesus has been faithful through all my failures, trials and tribulations. My purpose has

never been to degrade anyone, but to describe some of my struggles and, how, in the darkest of moments, Jesus was always there.

Truly there are several lessons that I learned. The first is the overwhelming love that God has for us. The second is the question as to what life is all about. It is the time of preparation of where one spends eternity. From time to time I think of the dream I had more than three decades ago. I can still see myself knocking on the door while there was intense pain in my hand. I reflect upon the fact that many in ministry somehow do not finish well by the end of their lives. The door represents the opening to a new life, and I will finish well and encourage you to do likewise. The third lesson is that the love of God is best stated in a little childhood hymn I learned in Sunday school so many years ago.

Jesus Loves Me This I Know

Verse 1

Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so.
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.

Refrain:

Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so.

Verse 2

Jesus loves me! This I know,
As He loved so long ago,
Taking children on His knee,
Saying, "Let them come to Me."

(Refrain)

Verse 3

Jesus loves me still today,
Walking with me on my way,
Wanting as a friend to give
Light and love to all who live.

(Refrain)

Verse 4

Jesus loves me! He who died
Heaven's gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in.

(Refrain)

Verse 5

Jesus loves me! He will stay
Close beside me all the way;
Thou hast bled and died for me,
I will henceforth live for Thee.

(Refrain)

The invitation of live for Jesus is free, but living it will cost you. Just consider, for example, the persecuted believers in other countries. Their strength comes from the Holy Spirit and from the Bible. For the challenges you have, consider

having your character transformed by renewing your mind in accordance to the character of God (Rom. 12:1-2). You can begin with the following:

Confession of the Word

This is my Bible
I am what it says I am
I have what it says I have
I can do what it says I can do

Today I will hear the Word of God
Faith will come to my spirit.

I boldly confess...
my mind is alert
my heart is receptive

I am about to receive
the incorruptible
the indestructible
ever-living seed of the Word of God

It will change my life
I will never be the same again

In Jesus' Name - Amen

Sometimes I like to take verses from the Bible and personalize them. They become so meaningful. Meditate on these at all times, especially during the dark days of life.

My Spiritual Blessings in Christ Jesus

(Personalized from Ephesians 1:3-14)

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed **me** in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

4 For he (**God the Father**) chose **me** in Jesus before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

5 he predestined **me** to be adopted as his **son/daughter** through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given **me** in the One he loves.

7 In Jesus **I have** redemption through Jesus' blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

8 that Jesus lavished on **me** with all wisdom and understanding.

9 And God the father made known to **me** the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Jesus Christ,

10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

11 In him **I** was also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of God who

works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

12 in order that **I**, who was the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

13 And **I** was also included in Christ when **I** heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. Having believed, **I** was marked in Jesus with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of **me** who **is** God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Saint Augustine once said,

“Jesus died for every one of us, as if there was only one of us.”

For God so loved you that He not only gave His only Son for you, but there are an abundant number of spiritual blessings for you as well. So now you might ask the question –

How do I begin my life with God?

Your new life begins by accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior. In the Bible you will see that God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life (Jer. 29:11). The Bible describes God's incredible love for you: “God so loved the world (including you) that He gave His one and only Son (Jesus), that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16). Jesus said that “I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly [that it might be full and meaningful]” (Jn. 10:10).

However, man is sinful and, therefore, separated from God. No one can experience God's love and

plan for his life because, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Man was created to have fellowship with God; but, because of his stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own independent way and the relationship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin. “The wages of sin is death [spiritual separation from God; i.e. hell]” (Rom. 6:23).

Jesus Christ is God’s only provision for your sin. Through Him you can know and experience God’s love and plan for your life. The sacrificial death of Jesus on a Roman cross paid for your sin. “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). However, Jesus rose from the grave so we too might have eternal life. “Christ died for our sins ... He was buried ... He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures ... He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred ...” (1 Cor. 15:3-6).

Jesus is the only way to have eternal life with God. “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me’” (Jn. 14:6). You must personally accept Jesus and the gift of eternal life. “For as many as received [accept] Him [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (Jn. 1:12). By simple faith you receive Jesus. Jesus said, “Behold, I stand at the door [of your heart] and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him” (Rev. 3:20). “By grace you have been saved through faith; and

that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9). When you have accepted Jesus you have been born again (see Jn. 3:1-8).

You can receive Jesus right now by faith through prayer (talking to God). God knows your heart and is not as concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be." Amen.

If you just prayed this prayer, you have made the best decision of your life. Your next step is to become part of a Bible-believing church where you can grow in your faith. Remember that Satan is not too delighted with your decision, but Almighty God and the angels of Heaven are rejoicing. Your pastor and new friends who are believers, as well as the Holy Spirit, will help you in your new journey. It is just for you that this book was written. Today the Spirit of God is changing lives around the world. He will do the same for you as you commit yourself to Him and His directives of life. As stated previously, remember the words of Saint Augustine, "Christ died for every one of us, as if there was only one of us."

**“For You, O LORD, have made me glad by
what You have done,
I will sing for joy at the works of
Your hands.”
- Psalm 92:4**

In His Service and Yours,

Bill Heinrich

Today Bill serves as a seminar speaker, adjunct professor, counselor and chaplain. When conducting church seminars, his wife Paivi shares some of her ministry experiences while she was in Jerusalem for ten years. He has written several books including an exhaustive study on the cultural background on the life of Jesus. He is an inspiration for those who are experiencing severe difficulties and are wondering if God really cares.

Books by William H Heinrich / Bill Heinrich

***In the Shame of Jesus: The Hidden
Story of Church-
Sponsored Anti-Semitism***

***Divine Healing: A Biblical and Practical
Study
Guide***

***Reality Denied: The Inconvenient
Truth about the
Middle East Conflict***

***Mysteries of the Messiah (as of 2012,
available by
Internet down-load only or by
private printing)***

***The Hand of God: Ancient Prophecies -
Modern
Miracles in Israel***

You can learn more of Bill and Paivi's ministry at:

www.VisitIsraelWithUs.com
www.EvidenceOfTruthMinistries.org
www.MysteriesOfTheMessiah.com