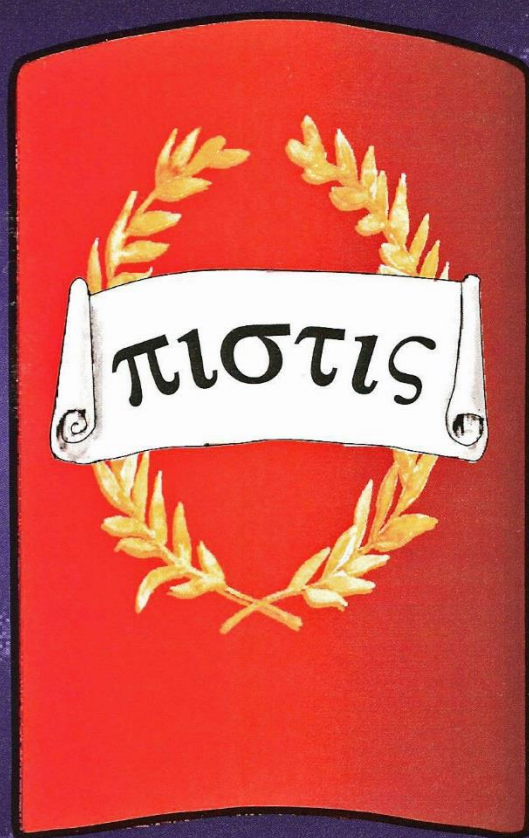
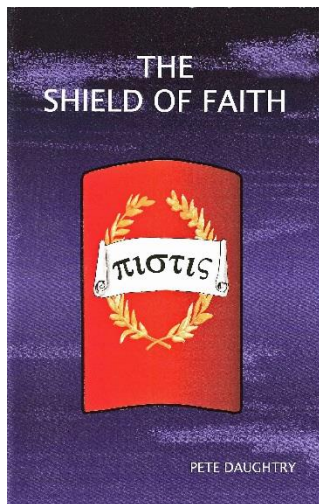


THE SHIELD OF FAITH



PETE DAUGHTRY



Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, whether he knows it or not, is involved in spiritual warfare. For this reason, God has provided for each believer a defensive armor that will enable him to hold his ground in battles against the world, the flesh, and the devil. One component of that armor, described by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:13-16, is the shield of faith. Just as the Roman soldier had to train in the use of his armor, so does the believer, through learning and applying the principles and promises of God's Word in his daily life. Only in this way is he able to "extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one." (Eph. 6:16)

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

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This book is edited from the lectures of W. W. "Pete" Daughtry.

A list of available recordings and publications will be provided on request.

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Preface

Before you begin your Bible study, you should be sure that you are in fellowship, under the control of God the Holy Spirit, so that He can make spiritual truth understandable to you. You can do this by naming any known sins to God the Father and accepting the forgiveness provided by the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

1 John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."¹

If you have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the issue for you is faith in Him. The Lord Jesus Christ made perfect provision for your salvation and eternal security. You need only tell God the Father that you accept the accomplished work of Christ on your behalf.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."

2 Cor. 5:21 "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Eph. 2:8, 9 "For 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, so that no one may boast."

Acts 16:31 "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..."

¹ This and subsequent quotations from Scripture are taken from the New American Standard Bible.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH

When a Roman citizen enlisted in the army, he received a complete set of armor that included a large, bulky shield. The shield was heavy and hard to lift, and even harder to carry for any length of time. To prepare for battle, the soldier had to build muscle and skill by practicing with his shield every day.

When we accept Jesus Christ as Savior, we enlist in God's army. From the moment of our salvation, we fight an unseen but very real enemy. We are part of a spiritual battle, an invisible war, for which human resources are useless. Spiritual warfare requires spiritual weapons, and God has abundantly provided these weapons for us. He has provided everything we need to fight and win in our Christian life. One very important provision is a full set of spiritual armor, which includes the shield of faith.

Therefore, take up the full armor [from]² God, so that you will be able to resist on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having belted your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having strapped on your feet the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. (Eph. 6:13-16)

God expects us to use the shield of faith in our lives. He wants us to learn about the shield and practice with it every day. He wants us to build spiritual muscle and sharpen our skills so that no adversity, heartache, or disaster can defeat us. This study is designed to help believers do just that.

WHAT IS THE SHIELD OF FAITH?

A shield is (1) a broad piece of defensive armor carried on the arm or in the hand, or (2) of person or thing that protects or defends. In Scripture, the term "shield of faith" is a metaphor—a teaching aid—that helps us understand the concept of an invisible, spiritual shield in the believer's soul.

The phrase "taking up the shield of faith" in Eph. 6:16 contains the Greek word *analambano*, translated "taking up," which means "to pick up and carry." From the imperative mood in the original Greek, we know that this is not a suggestion—it is a mandate. God commands us to pick up and carry the shield of faith in our lives.

² Words in brackets throughout this book indicate a corrected or modified translation from the original language.

When we pick up and carry the shield of faith, we are using the **faith-rest drill**³. We are depending on the promises and principles found in the Word of God.

The believer who carries the shield of faith has learned, through faithful study of the Scriptures, who and what God is. He understands God's character. He knows what God is like and how He treats His creatures. This believer has moved beyond academic understanding to practical application. He uses the principles of God's Word in everyday life.

To lift and carry the shield of faith, the believer must have spiritual strength. This strength is developed and maintained in the soul only through consistent, faithful study of God's Word. It cannot be done any other way.

TEN PRINCIPLES RELATED TO THE SHIELD OF FAITH

1. Only God can provide true, lasting happiness. Nothing else in the world—no person, thing, or circumstance—can do this for us. True happiness is the monopoly of God.
2. People, things, and circumstances that can make us “happy” can also make us unhappy. Although these details of life may provide temporary pleasure or stimulation, they may change or be lost at any time. Things that thrill us one moment may become, in an instant, a source of utter misery. People who bring us pleasure today may be antagonistic toward us tomorrow. The believer who trusts in people, money, success, marriage, or any other detail of life for his happiness is extremely unstable and vulnerable to every cosmic attack. The Bible warns us not to depend on earthly things for happiness: “This is what the LORD says: ‘Cursed is the man who [places his trust] in mankind and makes flesh his strength.’” (Jer. 17:5).
3. God can share His perfect happiness (+H) with the believer under the right spiritual circumstances. God is perfectly happy at all times, and He wants us to be as happy as He is. God's +H is the only happiness that lasts through good times and bad, prosperity and adversity.
4. The right spiritual circumstances for sharing God's happiness are created in the believer's soul as he executes God's plan for his life, that is, the **protocol plan** for the church. To execute God's plan, the believer must learn and obey the mandates in the Bible. In this way, we learn God's protocol—the way He expects us to do things. God has only one way of doing things: the right way. God expects believers to learn the precisely correct procedures of the Christian way of life.

³ Terms in bold throughout this book are defined in the Glossary at the end of the book.

One vital aspect of divine protocol is God’s mandate that the believer consistently study His Word. As we build a foundation of Bible doctrine in our souls, God can begin to share His happiness with us.

5. God expects us to pick up and carry the shield of faith in our daily lives as part of His protocol plan. In order to sustain happiness and stability through the changing circumstances of life, we must carry the shield of faith at all times. To do this, we must constantly maintain our spiritual strength.
6. Utilization of the shield of faith includes the correct, accurate, and proper use of the problem-solving devices of the Word of God. The shield of faith is part of every **problem-solving device**⁴ and technique in the Bible, and each problem-solving device is part of an extensive, all-encompassing system of doctrine—a system that God expects us to learn and use.
7. In order for any doctrinal problem-solving device to work, it must be combined with the shield of faith. The believer cannot benefit from any problem-solving device in the Word of God unless he associates it with the shield of faith in his thinking. When we **rebound**, for example, we not only name a sin to God, but also trust that He instantly forgives that sin (1 John 1:9). We use our faith to believe that He will “cleans us from all unrighteousness.” Every problem-solving technique in the Word of God is associated with the shield of faith. Without the simultaneous function of our faith, the problem-solving devices are of no benefit to us.
8. Spiritual strength to carry the shield of faith comes from a strong inner support system of Bible doctrine. In Heb. 4:12 the Bible says, “The Word of God is [alive and powerful].” As we learn Bible doctrine, this power and spiritual strength are built into our souls. The Holy Spirit is the Master Builder. He knows which doctrines we need to hear at any given time, and He uses the Biblical principles we learn to construct a system of support in our souls. This support system, made up of various doctrines linked together, fortifies us and establishes a solid foundation. It protects us from false doctrine and enables us to resist the urge to revert to human viewpoint. This support system cannot be built sporadically, and it cannot be built in a few months. It takes time to gain a solid, overall knowledge of God’s Word. We must be exposed to the whole counsel of God, not just our favorite passages. The only way this is accomplished is through continual, consistent intake of Bible doctrine taught by a pastor-teacher.

⁴ See Appendix.

9. The believer who fails to consistently learn Bible doctrine will not be strong enough to carry the shield of faith. Just as a lack of physical food weakens our bodies, a lack of spiritual food—Bible doctrine—weakens the believer’s soul. If we refuse to learn God’s Word, or try to learn just enough to get by, we will crack when the pressure of adversity comes. When we neglect Bible study, we often miss the very doctrine we need to pass a coming test, cope with a tough situation, or resist a temptation. No matter how much we may have learned in the past, if we are not consistent in our present intake of doctrine, we will not be strong enough to apply what we know.

Many believers are unable to carry the shield of faith for long periods of time. They may know some Bible verses and understand a few doctrines, and they may be able to trust their situation to God for a while, but because their intake of doctrine is sporadic, they are spiritually weak. They may try to pick up the shield of faith, but they are not able to carry it hour after hour, day by day. These believers are like Peter, who stepped over the side of boat and, for a little while, walked on the water (Matt. 14:22-33). But Peter lacked strength in his soul. He glanced around at the storm and was distracted by the chaos surrounding him. He panicked and began to sink into his circumstances. If Peter had kept his eyes on the Lord, he could have kept walking, but he could not go far because of the weakness in his soul. This wonderful illustration shows us what happens when we neglect Bible doctrine: our souls are weakened. When we face real life situations, we fail. We drop the shield of faith.

10. There is no substitute for Bible doctrine in the believer’s life. It is the key to everything in our relationship with God. Without it we will never know God’s happiness, we will never understand His purpose for placing us here on earth, and we will never live in the reality of His blessings.

FEAR: THE ENEMY OF FAITH

There is a tremendous amount of fear in our nation today. People have fears and insecurities related to almost every area of life: family, social life, finances, etc. People who feel insecure and afraid react to their fear by seeking human security in many ways. However, their search is futile because no real security exists apart from the plan and provision of God.

Fear is a deadly enemy of the Christian way of life. It is an emotional sin which renders the believer unable to think properly, especially in pressure situations. Fear is the abnormal, harmful function of emotion in the soul.

The Word of God warns that involvement in fear carries grave consequences for the believer:

- The fearful believer serves his emotions; he makes his emotions his god (Phil. 3:18-19).
- The fearful believer is hindered in his perception and metabolization of the Word of God (2 Cor. 6:11-12).
- The fearful believer's emotions distract him from executing God's plan for his life (Rom. 16:17-18).

The believer controlled by fear cannot function in his spiritual life. He cannot pick up and carry the shield of faith. He cannot learn doctrine or apply it. He is unable to recall doctrine previously learned.

If the believer fails to conquer his fear by applying Bible doctrine, this harmful emotion will tyrannize his soul and ultimately destroy his life. It is a vicious cycle: the more we succumb to fear, the more things we *will* fear. The more things we allow ourselves to fear, the more powerful fear becomes in our lives.

What fear is and what it does to the believer's soul can be summarized in an acrostic:

F - Failure to trust.
 E – Emotional instability.
 A – Arrogant reaction.
 R – Rejection of doctrine.

Fear results from failure to trust and causes severe emotional instability. When we react to a situation with arrogance rather than faith, we reject Bible doctrine and God's solutions, and fear is unavoidable.

Fear is a contradiction to God's plan for the believer's life. In 2 Tim. 1:7, Paul wrote to Timothy, "For God has not given us a [lifestyle of fear], but [a lifestyle] of power and [virtue] love and [sound judgment]."

The solution to fear is given in 1 John 4:18, "There is no fear in [virtue] love." When we execute the Christian way of life, we develop **virtue love** in our souls. Virtue love is the love produced by God the Holy Spirit. We grow to love God the Father (**personal love for God**), and we develop impersonal, **unconditional love** for all mankind. And we learn to be occupied with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This lifestyle of virtue love destroys the power of fear in our souls and in our lives.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH: BASIS, FUNCTION, AND PRECEDENT

The Basis for the Shield of Faith

The shield of faith is a powerful and effective defensive weapon because it is based on the omnipotence of God. We read in 1 Cor. 2:5, “[in order] that your faith would not [be in] the wisdom of men, but [in] the power of God.” The Greek word *hina*, translated “in order that,” denotes a purpose, an aim, or a goal for the believer. We learn the Word of God in order to build spiritual strength to use the shield of faith.

[in order] that your faith would not [be in] the wisdom of mankind, but [in] the power of God.

The phrase “the wisdom of mankind” refers to human viewpoint and human wisdom, which are never the solution to facing the pressures of life. We should never place our faith or confidence in the “wisdom” of mankind. To do so guarantees failure.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a wonderful alternative: God’s divine viewpoint, which comes only from His Word. Only God has true wisdom. Only God has the answers. Only He can give us, through His Word, the strength we need to pick up and carry the shield of faith.

Next in this passage are the Greek words *dunamis*, which means “power,” and *theos*, meaning “God.” The power that comes from God is Bible doctrine. No other power in existence is as strong as the Word of God in the believer’s soul. This very power is the basis, the foundation, for our utilization of the shield of faith.

The Function of the Shield of Faith

The function of the shield of faith is described in 2 Cor. 5:7, which says, “for we walk by faith, not by sight.” The word for faith is *pistis*. It refers here to the **faith-rest drill**, our use of the shield of faith. The word translated “walk” is *peripateo*, which refers to function, operation, or activity—our moment-by-moment function in the Christian life. We walk, one step at a time, holding the shield of faith. We do not walk “by sight.” The Greek word *eidous* means “external appearance.” It refers to the human way of thinking, human viewpoint, which always emphasizes the visible and the external.

Human viewpoint and God’s viewpoint are mutually exclusive. If the believer thinks according to the human point of view, he will not and cannot be strong enough to carry the shield of faith. Human viewpoint cannot provide spiritual strength. Only divine viewpoint from the Word of God can do that.

The Precedent for the Shield of Faith

The precedent for carrying the shield of faith is the faith we expressed at the point of salvation. Col 2:6 says, "Therefore, [in the same manner as] you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, [keep on walking] in Him." Every person who has received Jesus Christ as Savior did it the same way: by faith alone in Christ alone. But our faith does not end at the cross. The faith we used to believe in Jesus Christ is the same faith we carry into the Christian life, and, through learning and applying Bible doctrine, our faith keeps growing stronger.

This verse contains a command to keep on walking in Christ. At the moment of salvation, each believer is placed in union with Christ by means of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. We have a new position in Christ. We are identified with Him. And we have a responsibility to live the Christian way of life as God presents it in His Word.

Our identification with Christ makes us members of the Royal Family of God. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. That means that every spiritual asset God the Father gave to the humanity of Christ, He has also given to us. He expects us to use these assets to live the Christ life.

We cannot do this on our own. We could not save ourselves, and we cannot live the Christian way of life by ourselves. We cannot execute God's plan under our own power. God provides the power through the filling of the Spirit and Bible doctrine. He also provides the precedent, faith. Heb. 11:1 says, "Now faith is the [substance] of things hoped for, [the evidence] of things not seen." Even though we could not see Christ, we placed our faith in Him. When we carry the shield of faith in our Christian life, we are doing the same thing: we cannot see the shield, but on the basis of our knowledge of God's Word, we know it is there.

BUILDING OUR FAITH

In the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, the concept of faith is mentioned no less than thirty-six times. Heb. 11:6 tells us that the shield of faith is vital to every believer's life: "And without faith it is impossible to please [God], for the one who comes to God must believe that He exists, and that He proves to be One who rewards those who [diligently] seek Him."

The apostle Paul, in Rom. 10:17, explains how we build our faith: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ." This verse leaves no doubt that the way to develop faith, and the spiritual strength to use our faith, is to gain knowledge of God's Word through the teaching ministry of a pastor-teacher.

OUR NEED FOR THE SHIELD OF FAITH

We do not know what will happen in our future. Every day we face uncertainties in our nation and in our personal lives as well. Economic, social, family, or military disaster could occur at any time. Believers must be ready for anything. We must prepare ourselves by continually fortifying our souls with God's truth.

Unfortunately, many Christians fail in their preparation. They may go to church, but for all the wrong reasons. They hope to hear a message that entertains or words to make them feel good. They want quick, easy answers to their problems. In 2 Tim. 4:3, the apostle Paul says these believers want “to have their ears tickled.” They want to hear only the things they like and enjoy, and they care little for the information they so desperately need.

Because they are not interested in learning the whole counsel of God and their Bible class attendance is sporadic, they are spiritually weak. When adversity comes, they fall apart. They search for an emotional crutch, for someone or something on which to lean. They blame their failure—and their misery—on other people or circumstances. Because of their “take it or leave it” attitude toward doctrine, they have not built a strong support system in their souls. They cannot stabilize under pressure. They become frustrated, confused, and disillusioned. They often abandon their intake of God’s Word entirely. And many try to excuse their negative volition by proclaiming, “Doctrine doesn’t work.”

Doctrine does work! The Word of God never fails, but we often do. Our failure to learn doctrine consistently guarantees lack of preparation for the future. The inner support system of truth cannot be built in the soul of any believer with a nonchalant attitude toward Bible study. Inconsistent believers are weak believers. When weak believers face adversity, they fail. They simply are not prepared to do anything else.

ASSOCIATION OR DISSOCIATION?

When we face adversity, we have a choice: We can associate our thinking with the principles of doctrine, or we can dissociate from God’s Word and try to handle the crisis on our own. The believer’s decision to associate or dissociate determines his spiritual strength or weakness at any given moment.

Association means that we relate Bible doctrine we have learned to our situations or circumstances; we see ourselves and our circumstances in the light of the Word of God. When we pick up the shield of faith, we automatically associate with doctrine. Principles of truth circulate in our stream of consciousness, where we do our thinking. We keep in mind principles related to God’s grace, God’s essence or character, His promises and problem-solving devices.

To successfully face adversity, pressure, temptation, or even prosperity and success, we must associate with truth. Association with doctrine keeps us strong and stable, no matter what circumstances we face.

Dissociation has terrible consequences. When we dissociate under pressure, the door to our subconscious swings open. Our stream of consciousness is flooded with arrogance and emotional sins: soul garbage. Instead of circulating doctrine in our stream of consciousness, we circulate fear, worry, and anxiety; self-pity, resentment, or bitterness; vindictiveness, implacability, or self-righteousness. Or maybe that terrible emotional sin, guilt.

The Christian who is inconsistent in learning doctrine stores a great deal of garbage in his subconscious. When he faces adversity, he habitually dissociates from God's Word and turns to human viewpoint. His soul is tyrannized by arrogance and emotional sins. He becomes totally preoccupied with himself.

Dissociating believers always try to solve their problems with human viewpoint. They may call on friends for help and advice. They blame others. They feel sorry for themselves. But these human solutions do not solve anything; they only multiply and intensify the problems.

No Christian is immune to this process. Regardless of our level of spiritual growth, we can still decide to dissociate. Dissociation is spiritual failure. But choosing to associate our thinking with God's Word is stability, strength, and spiritual success.

PASSING THE BATON

Just as in a relay race one runner passes the baton to another, we must pass our spiritual baton to the younger generation. The baton of the Christian life is the shield of faith. The greatest contribution we can make to the future is to teach our children to use the shield of faith. Opportunities to pass the spiritual baton can be found wherever children are found: in the family, in the local church, or in other Christian organizations.

Although believers who do not have children are responsible to the younger generation in general, the challenge ultimately belongs to parents. We must teach our children to appreciate life using God's divine viewpoint rather than the world's human viewpoint. We must emphasize to them the importance of spiritual growth; We must teach them to carry the shield of faith.

MOSES' PARENTS PASSED THE BATON

Heb. 11:23-29 tells the story of two parents who passed the spiritual baton to their son, and this passage reveals the tremendous impact their actions had on his life and in history.

Heb. 11:23 says, "By [means of] faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden for three months by his parents, because they saw [him as] a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's [command]." Moses' parents, Amram and Jochebed, must have been tempted to panic, but they did not. They picked up and carried the shield of faith.

If they had been afraid, they would have been unable to think clearly. Fear, an emotional sin, would have paralyzed their thought processes. Instead of trusting the Lord, they would have reverted to emotions and human viewpoint. Worry and anxiety would have flooded their thinking and rapidly intensified into panic. Desperate to save their son, they would have made bad decisions.

Because Amram and Jochebed associated their situation with God's word, they calmly chose to do the right thing: they depended on the Lord. And because of their confidence in Him, the Lord was free to work in their lives. Exodus 2 tells us what God was able to do for Amram and Jochebed: Pharaoh's daughter found the baby Moses in the reeds at the edge of the Nile River and took him to the palace for herself. She did not allow him to be killed. And when she needed a Hebrew woman to care for the baby, Moses' mother got the job. When Jochebed's son was returned to her, she had the opportunity to teach him principles of doctrine as he grew.

These events were not a series of happy accidents. God was doing His perfect work. Because Moses' parents carried the shield of faith, God was not hindered by any human viewpoint, arrogance, or emotion on their part. He was able to work out all the details, accomplishing much more than they could have hoped or dreamed. The story of Moses is a wonderful illustration of what God can do in the lives of believers who trust Him. When we decide to pick up and carry the shield of faith, when we choose to trust God in difficult circumstances, God honors that decision. He works out the details perfectly, so that the outcome benefits us and glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ.

Only the Lord can see tomorrow; we cannot. Too often, however, we stubbornly try to figure things out for ourselves. We try to make sure our lives go the way we want them to. We try to force people and circumstances to fall in line to suit ourselves. This shortsighted, human viewpoint attitude will not work for believers in Jesus Christ. When we are determined to push and shove, plan and scheme our way through life, God stands aside and lets us make a mess of things. He waits patiently for us to recognize this truth: when we take our lives into our own hands, we always lose.

The believer who tries to "make things happen" is distracted from God's plan. He is dissociated from doctrine and disoriented in his Christian life. The result? Confusion, disappointment, and disillusion when things do not go his way.

The solution is simple: Trusting the Lord step by step, moment by moment, we do what doctrine says is right. We do not have to worry about the details. God takes care of everything as long as we stay out of His way.

LEARNING TO LOVE GOD

One of the right things doctrine says we must do is to develop a love relationship with God. Not all believers truly love God; We must *learn* to love Him. To develop personal love for God requires that we gain knowledge of His Word and use that information in our lives. If we do this consistently, we will grow to love Him. We will be motivated by that love to make good decisions—decisions that line up with doctrine—and the details of our lives will fall into place.

Rom. 8:28 says, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” If we make doctrine our top priority—if we learn it, metabolize it, and apply it in our lives—we will develop a wonderful love relationship with God. Then, because we love and trust Him, He is free to pull our lives together, to cause “all things to work together for good.”

Moses’ parents demonstrated a tremendous love for God as they carried the shield of faith through terrible circumstances. What an example these parents set for their children! They not only provided academic instruction of doctrine, but they also taught their children by the way they lived. And their decision to trust Him paid tremendous dividends.

Moses’ older brother Aaron and his sister Miriam saw their parents carry the shield of faith. When Moses was older, he heard the story of his parents’ courageous actions: how their good decisions had saved his life, and how, as a result, God had worked out all the details. When the time came for Moses to assume adult responsibilities, he was ready. Following his parents’ instruction and example, Moses carried the shield of faith throughout his life.

Heb. 11:24-29 documents the great impact Moses’ parents had in his life because they passed him the spiritual baton:

By [means of] faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By [means of] faith he left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he persevered, as though seeing Him who is unseen. By [means of] faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch them. By [means of] faith they passed through the Red Sea as

through dry land; and the Egyptians, when they attempted it, were drowned.

In verses 24-26, Moses used the shield of faith when he was still in Egypt. Next in line to become Pharaoh, he refused that honor, choosing instead to fulfill God's plan for his life. In verse 27, Moses used the shield of faith when he left Egypt and went to Midian. In verse 28, Moses was back in Egypt, still using the shield of faith. Then, in verse 29, he left Egypt once again, carrying the shield of faith as he led the children of Israel out of slavery. Moses lived in the reality of this principle: The shield of faith works, and it does so regardless of our circumstances.

No matter where he was or what situation he faced, Moses carried the shield of faith. Whether he was alone in the desert, confronting the pharaoh in Egypt, or leading 2,000,000 people through the Red Sea, he chose to trust the Lord. Despite tremendous opposition and numerous obstacles, Moses consistently demonstrated great leadership ability, integrity, and magnificent courage.

Moses' parents never knew how important their use of the shield of faith had been in God's overall plan. They never knew the contribution their son made to God's first **client nation**, Israel. But they knew that carrying the shield of faith and passing it on to their children was the right thing to do, and they did it.

The same is true for believers today. We may not see all the good things that result from our carrying the shield of faith. We may not fully know the contribution we make to our own client nation. We may not always see how our good decisions influence the lives of other people. But God's Word says that every choice we make is important, and when we decide to associate with doctrine, to build spiritual strength, to pass the spiritual baton to our children, we have enormous impact—in our own lives, in the lives of others, and in future generations.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AS OUR SHIELD

At the beginning of our study, we defined a shield as “a person or thing that protects or defends.” The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is our shield—He protects and defends every believer. The psalmist wrote:

But You, LORD, are a shield around me,
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.
(Ps. 3:3)

Our soul waits for the LORD;
He is our help and our shield.
(Ps. 33:20)

For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
The LORD gives grace and glory;
He withholds no good thing from those who walk with integrity.
LORD of armies,
[Happy] is the person who trusts in You!
(Ps. 84:11-12)

One who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
Will lodge in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress,
My God, in whom I trust!"
For it is He who rescues you from the net of the trapper
And from the deadly plague.
He will cover you with His pinions,
And under His wings you may take refuge;
His [doctrine] is a shield and [a defensive] wall.
(Ps. 91:1-4)

DISASTER IN THE DESERT

For over 400 years the Jews had lived in Egypt. Because the Egyptians felt threatened by the vigorous Hebrew people, they had enslaved them. The children of Israel were horribly mistreated by their Egyptian taskmasters. but instead of being diminished or destroyed by such persecution, the Jews grew stronger than ever and increased in number.

After God had inflicted ten powerful plagues on Egypt, Pharaoh agreed to let the Jews leave the country. Under Moses' leadership, they marched into the desert. Ex. 13:18-22 says,

Therefore God led the people around by way of the [desert] to the Red Sea; and the sons of Israel went up in battle formation from the land of Egypt. And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had made the sons of Israel solemnly swear, saying, "God will certainly take care of you, and you shall carry my bones from here with you." Then they set out from Succoth and camped in Etham, on the edge of the [desert]. And the LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from the presence of the people.

In this way, the Lord guided Moses and the Israelites to freedom. Following the Lord's orders, Moses led the children of Israel to the shore of the Red Sea, where they camped between two mountain ranges—one to the north and one to the south.

Ex. 14:9 tells us what happened next:

Then the Egyptians chased after them with all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army, and they overtook them camping by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon (the two mountain ranges).

Pharaoh had changed his mind. He wanted his slaves back. And he pursued them with the mightiest, most fearsome army of the day.

From the human point of view, the children of Israel did not stand a chance. The situation was hopeless. Trapped between the mountains, the sea, and Pharaoh's advancing army, there was no earthly way to avoid catastrophe. Why had the Lord guided them to this place? Moses had faithfully followed His instructions and led the children of Israel into a crisis. They had done everything right, and the result was disaster.

This was not a cruel trick on the Lord's part—far from it. God cannot be unfair. In all He does, He expresses His perfect character. The Lord Jesus Christ had a purpose in mind when He allowed them to face crisis. It was part of God's perfect plan.

DISASTER TESTING

Every believer faces disaster, catastrophe, or crisis at some time in his life. Disaster tests usually strike when life is smooth, easy, and routine. The believer wakes up expecting a normal day, then—boom! He is struggling to survive under intense pressure. Disaster testing can occur in any area of life. It may be related to our family, home, health, job, or finances. We may face divorce, financial ruin, life-threatening illness, or the death of someone we love. Sometimes believers are victims of heinous crimes or of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, fires, hurricanes, or tornadoes.

In a crisis, as in all life situations, attitude is all-important. The believer must constantly rely on principles of Bible doctrine previously learned. He must understand that he is still alive because God wants him to be alive. And he must remember this fact: God allowed him to remain on earth for a reason—to execute His plan and His will. God still has a job for that believer to do.

God has a purpose in mind for everything He allows to happen in our lives. His reasons for allowing us to suffer are always tailored to our individual spiritual needs. But in every case,

God wants to teach us, to demonstrate the sufficiency of His grace in adversity, and to provide opportunity for accelerated spiritual growth.

God often uses crisis to reveal the true nature and quality of the believer's spiritual life. Has he been consistent in building spiritual strength through Bible study? Is his relationship with God something of substance? Does he depend on the Lord always or just when things are going his way?

It is easy to appear to be a powerful, victorious Christian when life is pleasant and predictable. But if the believer's spiritual life is a sham, if he has been lying to himself, working hard to convince himself and other people that he is a great Christian, disaster exposes that deception. Then, after God has stripped him of all pretense, the believer can begin to grow and develop a truly outstanding relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH IN DISASTER

When God assigns a task to any Christian, He first provides all the doctrinal know how and spiritual equipment needed to do the job. The believer who has been consistent and faithful in his spiritual training is ready for any challenge.

The shield of faith is one of the best pieces of equipment God provides for disaster. Ephesians 6:16 instructs every believer to pick up and carry the defensive shield when unexpected adversity strikes: "In addition to all (the various parts of the believer's defensive armor), [pick up and carry] the shield of faith [in order that] you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one."

The "evil one" is our bitter enemy, Satan. Always alert, he constantly and relentlessly invents clever plans, ingenious strategies designed to destroy our effectiveness in God's plan. Satan's "flaming arrows" are surprise attacks on believers. These vicious assaults can disorient, discourage, and destabilize the believer's thinking.

Satan shows no restraint when he attempts to neutralize believers who are positive toward doctrine. He goes as far as God allows him to go. But if we have assigned top priority to Bible doctrine, if we have learned to use God's problem-solving devices, we do not have to fear Satan's assaults. We do not have to feel intimidated. No matter how powerful those flaming arrows may be, God's power is greater. No matter how hard he tries, Satan cannot penetrate the shield of faith.

SPIRITUAL FAILURE AT THE RED SEA

The children of Israel should have lifted the shield of faith and claimed spiritual victory at the Red Sea, but they did not. Ex. 14:10 tells us what happened: "As Pharaoh approached,

the sons of Israel looked, and behold, the Egyptians were coming after them, and they became [terrified]; so the sons of Israel [screamed] out to the LORD.” God had provided a wonderful opportunity for the children of Israel to demonstrate the power of His Word. But instead of confidently resting in the Lord’s protection and provision, they chose to utterly fail.

One important reason for their failure is indicated by the Hebrew word *nasa*, which is translated “looked.” *Nasa* means “to stare at” or “to concentrate on” something. Instead of being occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Jews were concentrating on Pharaoh’s advancing army. They were preoccupied with the adversity. Because they focused on their adverse circumstances, they were instantly overcome by harmful emotions. Fear and terror eclipsed doctrinal thinking, and they panicked. When they screamed out to the Lord, their cries were motivated by fear, not faith. They were hysterical.

THE DANGER OF INCORRECT FOCUS

One of the worst things a believer can do in adversity is dwell on his problems. Dwelling on a problem is like trying to chew an impossibly tough piece of steak--we expend a lot of energy and do not accomplish a thing. Certainly, we must face reality and admit that the problem exists, but when we concentrate on the problem to the exclusion of doctrine, we are in trouble. No problem is ever solved by obsessively reviewing it in our minds. On the contrary, instead of solving problems, compulsive rumination actually multiplies the believer’s woes by triggering a disastrous process of spiritual and mental decline.

As a Christian focuses on the adversity in his life, his thoughts turn inward. He becomes subjective and self-centered. This morbid self-absorption forms soul barriers that obscure spiritual vision and block doctrinal insight. Application of Bible principles is impossible under these circumstances. As long as the believer concentrates on self and circumstances, his thinking continues to deteriorate. If his focus is not corrected, he will sink into a miserable morass of anxiety, confusion, and despair.

THE SOLUTION TO INCORRECT FOCUS

Although we encounter problems of many kinds throughout our lives, we are not doomed to defeat. In his word, God provides perfect solutions to every adversity, every heartache, every disaster we will ever face. He gave us volition so that we can decide for ourselves what the object of our focus will be. If we choose to think of God’s grace and His faithfulness, if we concentrate on who and what the Lord Jesus Christ is, we will not be overcome by the emotional sins that could destroy us. Instead, as we turn our thoughts toward the liberating truths of Bible doctrine, we are transformed by that truth into the victorious spiritual heroes God intended us to be.

DISSOCIATION GUARANTEES FAILURE

As the children of Israel focused on Pharaoh's advancing army, they disconnected their thinking from the doctrine they had learned. This dissociation, in turn, caused them to lose touch with reality. In Ex. 14:11, we see how they expressed the irrational nature of dissociation: "Then they said to Moses, 'Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the [desert]? Why have you dealt with us in this way, [causing us to leave] Egypt?'" When they divorced their thinking from God's Word, their emotions ran wild. This emotional revolt of the soul distorted their view of the entire situation.

The true facts should have been clear to the Jews: They had willingly, even gladly, marched away from the terrible hardships of slavery. God had orchestrated a miraculous grace deliverance from their Egyptian persecutors, and He had promised to protect them from all harm.

But the children of Israel were too busy whining, complaining, and feeling sorry for themselves to care about the facts. In their bitterness they blamed Moses for their unhappiness, and they assaulted him with hateful sarcasm.

THE DANGERS OF DISSOCIATION

Like the children of Israel, any Christian who dissociates from doctrinal thinking is easily overcome by emotional sins such as fear, anger, self-pity, resentment, and frustration. These noxious attitudes distort his view of life and circumstances, and they make him miserable.

Dissociated believers look for someone—anyone—to blame for their pathetic state of mind. By blaming others, they avoid placing the responsibility where it belongs, on themselves.

The dissociated believer who refuses to rebound and return to doctrinal thinking allows circumstances to dictate his moods. If circumstances are pleasant, he is pleasant. But if things do not go his way, he is a monster.

As his life begins to unravel, he tries a variety of human pseudo-solutions. These "band-aid" remedies serve only to postpone the inevitable, hard consequences of his foolishness. Because harmful emotions control his soul, the dissociated Christian makes one bad decision after another. Instead of enjoying the exquisite life God offers every believer, he staggers blindly through life, dying a little each day.

Dissociation is a matter of choice. Any believer, no matter how spiritually mature, can choose to abandon doctrinal thought and suffer the consequences. To fortify our souls against this ever-present danger, we must constantly replenish our spiritual resources and strengthen our resolve by learning, metabolizing, and applying God's Word.

THE SLAVE MENTALITY

The emotional reaction of the children of Israel revealed a serious character flaw: They lacked capacity for freedom. The physical chains and shackles were gone, but in their minds, in their thinking, they were still slaves. In Ex. 14:12, they revealed their slave mentality when they said to Moses, in effect, “We told you so!” This verse says, “Didn’t we say to you in Egypt, ‘Leave us alone; let us serve the Egyptians’? It would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

The Lord had blessed them in a marvelous way. They had marched confidently into the desert, celebrating and praising His name. But the first time their safety was threatened, their happiness vanished. Terror gripped their souls. They were shocked. The carefree, utopian lifestyle they had envisioned did not exist. Freedom was not fun anymore.

Faced with personal duty and individual spiritual responsibility, they balked. “Forget freedom,” they said. “We want safety and security, and we want it now!”

THE SLAVE MENTALITY IN THE U.S.A.

The slave mentality is rampant in our client nation today. Many Christians live a never-ending nightmare of fear and insecurity. Seeking relief from their emotional pain, they try various human “solutions”. They want, more than anything, to feel safe. This inordinate desire for human security is one reason an increasing number of Americans accepts evil ideologies such as socialized medicine and the welfare state. They believe the answer to all their fears lies in more government control over the lives of citizens.

Adding to this problem is the fact that many Americans have an exaggerated sense of entitlement. They arrogantly demand their rights, but they refuse personal responsibility. They view government as a benevolent caretaker who can solve their most intimate problems. They want government to remove all risk from their lives

The government bureaucracy, with its insatiable appetite for power and control, is happy to accommodate the slave mentality. Each time it broadens its power base by passing new legislation, the politicians promise the new laws will make life better for all.

Many Americans, because they are ignorant of God's establishment truth, never question this warped way of thinking. They fail to realize that with each new restriction we lose a little—or a lot—of precious freedom. Our bloated government bureaucracy has bullied its way into almost every aspect of our lives. Our freedoms are being restricted in many areas, such as taxation, gun ownership, business ownership, and our children's education.

When we see our liberties being snatched away, it is easy to blame the leadership, as the children of Israel blamed Moses. However, the Bible teaches that in client nations, the responsibility for preserving freedom belongs to each believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. If the Christian fulfills his obligations to God, the nation prospers. If he fails in his spiritual responsibilities, the nation declines. A principle to remember: "As goes the believer, so goes the nation."⁵

The alarming down trend we see in our nation today is a direct result of the spiritual failure of American believers. Christians are abandoning Bible doctrine as never before in the history of our great land. Preoccupied with their own pursuits, many believers barely give a thought to their spiritual responsibilities. "Let someone else do it," they say. "We don't have the time." They do not seem to care that their souls are starving for spiritual nourishment as their Bibles are tossed aside to collect dust. Too many empty, wasted souls are living empty, wasted lives. And our nation is paying an awful price.

MOSES' ASSOCIATION WITH DOCTRINE

We have seen in Ex. 14:10-12 that dissociation from doctrine causes unstable, chaotic thinking. In the next two verses, Moses demonstrates the opposite principle: Association with doctrine produces stability of mind.

But Moses said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will perform for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again, ever. The LORD will fight for you, while you keep silent."
(Ex. 14:13-14)

What a magnificent illustration of the shield of faith in action! Moses faced the same pressure that the children of Israel confronted, and much more. As the Pharaoh's army thundered toward him, Moses had to stabilize his own thinking and control two million hysterical men, women, and children.

How easy it would have been for Moses to collapse under such pressure! He could have given up. He could have joined the others in dissociation and defeat. But he chose instead to associate his thinking with the Word of God. And because of this good decision, he remained calm while those around him fell apart.

Moses handled the pressure perfectly. First, he faced reality and identified the problem. Then, he applied the doctrine he knew to his circumstances. Like drawing water from a well, Moses drew doctrine from the storehouse of his soul. As he stood before the people, he was

⁵ R. B. Thieme, Jr., former Pastor-Teacher of Berachah Church in Houston, TX.

able to avoid any emotional reaction—no anger, no frustration, no fear. Moses could think clearly and objectively. Since Moses associated his thinking with doctrine, he viewed his situation from the divine viewpoint. And from this position of strength, he challenged the children of Israel to hold their ground.

TRUE GREATNESS

Without question, Moses was a man of superior character. But he was not born that way. He did not accidentally develop outstanding leadership ability. He did not instinctively know how to associate his thinking with God's Word and to stand firm in adversity. He had to learn these spiritual skills and sharpen them through constant practice.

The Bible divides Moses' life into three phases. The first forty years he lived in Egypt. As we have seen, he learned doctrine from his parents during a great portion of that time. Then he left Egypt, and for another forty years he lived in the desert. During this time, the Lord Jesus Christ taught him principles of doctrine (Psalm 103:7). God's plan for the last forty years of Moses' life was for this remarkable man to lead the children of Israel and to teach them doctrine (Psalm 105:26).

Moses was qualified for this leadership position, this awesome responsibility, because he had gained a thorough understanding of God's Word. From the time his parents taught him doctrine in Egypt to the day he died, Moses dedicated his life to learning and applying the word of God. And because he held unswervingly to this aim, he attained true greatness.

PROFESSIONALISM, INTEGRITY, AND HUMILITY

We live in a unique period of history. In our dispensation, the Church Age, God has made it possible for the ordinary believer to become extraordinary. Any believer can attain true spiritual greatness if he executes God's plan for this life. And God's plan for each believer's life includes the fulfillment of this important principle: *Professionalism plus integrity, harmonized by humility, produces true greatness.*

Professionalism is spiritual know-how. The believer with professionalism understands the techniques and mechanics presented in God's Word. He has learned God's problem-solving devices, and he understands how they work.

Integrity is soul strength, the spiritual energy required to put professionalism to work in the believer's life.

Professionalism is knowing; integrity is energy for doing. One is useless without the other. It is not enough to know how to solve problems. We must have the spiritual energy to put that know-how to work. Professionalism and integrity must work as a team in the soul.

They must harmonize. And this is possible only when the believer maintains an attitude of humility.

Humility in the believer's soul allows him to:

- build professionalism (spiritual know-how),
- maintain integrity (spiritual energy),
- combine these two assets into a unified, harmonized function in his life.

Humility is essential for building professionalism. In order to gain spiritual know-how, the believer must learn Bible doctrine from his pastor-teacher. There is no other way to do it.

Since God wants every believer to learn His Word, He set up a system of authority whereby doctrine is made available to all who desire it. At the point of salvation, God the Holy Spirit gives certain men the spiritual gift of pastor-teacher. This gift places the pastor in authority over his local church and makes him responsible for studying and teaching doctrine to his congregation.

Why do some believers benefit from their pastor's teaching while others do not? How is it possible for Christians to attend Bible class year after year and consistently fail to grow spiritually? The key is humility. The believer with humility is teachable. The believer without humility is arrogant and unteachable.

Humility enables us to submit to our pastor's spiritual authority in the local church. Humility ensures respect for God, for God's Word, and for the God-given spiritual gift of pastor teacher. The humble believer is able to learn the techniques and mechanics of the Word of God. He develops professionalism.

Just as humility is essential for gaining spiritual-know how, it is indispensable for the believer to build and maintain integrity. As we have seen, integrity is the spiritual energy necessary to put professionalism to work. Integrity is formed in the believer's soul as he consistently, faithfully learns Bible doctrine. In order to maintain integrity, the believer must maintain his spiritual momentum. He must make daily decisions to put Bible doctrine first in his life. He must make God's Word his top priority day after day. This single-minded pursuit of God's Word is impossible to maintain apart from humility. Only the humble believer is able to put doctrine first, above self and above everything else.

When the believer has gained professionalism and integrity, his humility continues to harmonize and blend these two functions in his soul. He learns and he applies, day after day. He executes God's plan for his life, and, just as Moses did, he attains true greatness in the spiritual life.

THE HUMILITY OF MOSES

If any man ever had reason to be full of himself, it was Moses. He was extremely intelligent—a genius in fact. He was well educated in at least nine different fields of study, including architecture and military science. Reared in the splendor of Pharaoh's palace, he was next in line for the throne of Egypt, the mightiest nation in the world at that time. As Pharaoh, Moses would have inherited vast wealth, power, luxury, fame—every earthly thing a man could want. But he turned it down. Instead of assuming the throne, Moses chose to lead 2,000,000 rude, ungrateful people into the desert—because it was God's will.

Most people, if given Moses' job, would have quit on the first day. But Moses not only accepted his responsibility, but he performed his duties with great courage and spiritual skill. Even when the children of Israel maligned his character and spurned his authority, Moses continued to teach and care for them. He remained faithful to them for the rest of his life.

How could this man be so unselfish? How could he turn down such awesome earthly glory? What enabled him to stay with the children of Israel for forty years and keep his sanity?

We find the answer in Num. 12:3. It says, "(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any person who was on the face of the earth.)" Because Moses had humility, he centered his thinking and his life around God's word. His top priority was to execute God's plan. And he did this so consistently that, even today, he is considered by many to be the greatest human leader who ever lived.

Although Moses lived in Old Testament times, his life is a wonderful testimony for believers today. Throughout the ages, this principle never changes: *God wants believers to develop humility*. Let us take a closer look at this basic Christian virtue.

HUMILITY

1. *Humility never makes an issue of self.* Instead of focusing on self, the believer with humility directs his attention toward the promises and principles of the Word of God. He keeps his eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of his concentration on God and His Word, the humble believer avoids being trapped in the cosmic quicksand of arrogant subjectivity and emotionalism. Humility protects him from these destructive attitudes.
2. *Humility is not demeaning.* Having humility does not condemn a person to life as a doormat for others to stomp on. Humility never humiliates and never degrades a person. God does not expect us to walk around with downcast eyes, shuffling our feet, saying, "Aw, shucks, it wasn't nuthin'." The Lord Jesus Christ had more humility than anyone who ever lived, and he certainly never acted like

that. Throughout his life and ministry, and even while He suffered on the cross, He maintained perfect poise and great dignity.

3. *Humility functions under the ten problem-solving devices of Gods plan, with special emphasis on grace orientation and occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ.* The believer with humility understands that we cannot solve our problems apart from the techniques taught in God's Word. He understands grace; he understands that none of us earns or deserves good things from God, but that God, through Jesus Christ, has found a way to bless us anyway. The humble believer appreciates the fact that even though God owes us nothing, He graciously gives us all things, and he knows that all this is possible because of the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.
4. *Humility is objective and faces reality.* The believer with humility has a clear, realistic view of his life and his circumstances. He objectively examines himself and his attitudes in the light of the word of God. In contrast, the arrogant, subjective believer is divorced from reality. He looks at his life through a warped windowpane; his view of God, self, other people, and circumstances is distorted and obscured. He ignores any information that challenges his own opinions or conflicts with his false idea of self. He sees only the things he wishes to see, and he hears only what he wants to hear.
5. *Humility is God-conscious, not self-conscious.* The humble believer concentrates on God instead of on self. When he faces pressure, heartache, or disaster, he looks for the blessing in the situation. He knows God always allows adversity for a reason. To the believer with humility, problems are simply opportunities to make good decisions, glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer who is self-conscious concentrates on self. He worries about how he appears to others. He frets about what people think of him, forgetting that what God thinks is all that counts. When the self-centered believer faces pressure, his primary concern is how the circumstance will affect him—how he may “lose out.” When he feels he has been treated unfairly, he reacts with arrogance and emotional sins, which destroy his spiritual life.
6. *Humility does not deny the soul's self-consciousness, but rather relates normal awareness of self to Bible doctrine.* It is normal to be aware of our own existence, but arrogance turns self-awareness into miserable self-centeredness. The humble believer, however, relates his awareness of self to the principles of the word of God. Instead of focusing on his problems, he focuses on God's problem-solving devices. Instead of being preoccupied with self, he is occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ. In every circumstance of life, he associates his thinking with Bible doctrine.

7. Humility cannot coexist with any sin. No believer can maintain humility if he fails to use the rebound technique, keeping “short accounts” with God. Arrogant and emotional sins are especially deadly; the believer involved in these sins destroys any humility he may have developed in the past. Until he names his sins to God and is restored to fellowship (1 John 1: 9), he will stew in his own misery and try his best to spread it to everyone in his periphery. The believer involved in the arrogance or emotional complex of sins may display false humility—he may appear humble to others—but inside, he knows he is a phony. No matter how humble he may seem, he is secretly arrogant and desperately unhappy. His soul is loaded down with fear, bitterness, jealousy, hatred, and many other misery-producing sins. Instead of acknowledging his flaws and turning to God's word for solutions, the arrogant believer runs from the truth about himself. He denies his problems, projects his flaws onto others, and sublimates his feelings. He is disoriented to life, disconnected from God's truth, and dying inside everyday he lives. Yet he chooses to remain preoccupied with himself.

Humility is essential for Christian problem solving. The Lord Jesus Christ demonstrated the fact that when a believer has maximum humility in his soul, there is no such thing as an impossible situation or an insurmountable problem. The Lord Jesus Christ encountered far greater adversity than any of us ever will. But because he had humility, he handled it all perfectly. Now we must follow his example.

GOD'S PROMISE

To prepare the children of Israel for their journey, Moses began holding “Bible class” while they were still in slavery. God gave Moses some important information to pass on to brand new client nation Israel. This message, loaded with stabilizing promises, is recorded in Ex. 6:2-8.

God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as strangers. Furthermore I have heard the groaning of the sons of Israel, because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Say, therefore, to the sons of Israel, ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the labors of the Egyptians, and I will rescue you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments. Then I will take you as My people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from under the

labors of the Egyptians. I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you *as a possession*; I am the LORD.”

These wonderful words were designed to fortify the Jews with spiritual strength for the tough times ahead, but there was a problem, as we read in Ex. 6:9: “So Moses said this to the sons of Israel, but they did not listen to Moses on account of their despondency and cruel bondage.” The phrase “they did not listen” indicates a serious spiritual defect that would hinder the Exodus generation of believers throughout their desert experience.

INCONSISTENT LISTENING

Maybe they did listen sometimes. But mostly they tuned Moses out. Even when they made it to “Bible class,” their thoughts were elsewhere. Because they focused on self and circumstances, harmful emotions ruled their thinking. They could not concentrate on the lesson for more than a moment or two. As Moses enthusiastically taught God's Word, they stared at him with vacant eyes. They were daydreaming and thinking, “How long must we endure this pain? We cannot handle it anymore. It’s not fair.”

Before they left Egypt, these believers developed a dangerous habit, that of inconsistently listening to doctrine. It was spiritual sloppiness, a subtle form of negative volition. It undermined their spiritual lives, and it set them up to fail.

Many Church Age believers fall into the habit of “spacing out” when doctrine is taught. Because they are preoccupied with self and the problems they face, emotional sins dominate their thinking. If they attend Bible class, they find it impossible to concentrate; they gain little or nothing by having been there.

Whether the inconsistent listener skips class altogether or attends in a state of distracted self-absorption, the result is the same: He deprives himself of spiritual food. As his off-and-on pattern of listening continues, he becomes progressively weaker in his spiritual life.

Inconsistent listening to doctrine means inconsistent application. Even if the “sometimes” listener learns a doctrinal principle or two, he is rarely able to apply what he learns. Eventually, he releases his grip on doctrine and plunges into human viewpoint. He shuns God’s problem-solving devices and tries to invent human solutions for himself. Disconnected from divine power, he limps through life trying to use his own human strength.

EMOTIONAL INSTABILITY

Inconsistent listeners are ruled by their emotions. The pattern is always the same: As the believer reduces his intake of doctrine, he loses his only source of true stability. A dark,

aching emptiness begins to grow in his soul; a vacuum forms in the place where doctrine used to be. Frantic to ease the pain, he begins to pursue earthly things. He is convinced that if he can associate with the right people and arrange the right circumstances, he can be happy. No matter how hard he tries, however, the perfect people and circumstances never quite fall into place. As his frustration increases, he tries even harder to make a good life for himself. He tries so hard, in fact, that he does not notice that people and circumstances have enslaved him.

When he has something exciting to look forward to, he is up. When it does not work out, he is down. When people in circumstances are pleasant, he is exhilarated. When they disappoint, he is inconsolable. He is caught in an emotional tornado, a dizzying whirlwind of turbulent feelings and extreme mood swings. He is out of control.

The children of Israel marched into the desert on an emotional high, praising God and reveling in His grace. When they saw Pharaoh's army approaching in a cloud of dust, they hit bottom. When God parted the Red Sea and rescued them, they were beside themselves with joy once again. Free from Egyptian oppression, they chose to be enslaved again—this time to their emotions. They were completely at the mercy of their circumstances.

It was an exhausting way to live, but they seem to prefer it because they never changed. They never stopped sabotaging themselves by on-and-off listening. Spiritual strength? The shield of faith? Somehow these subjects did not interest them. Even when the pressure was more than they could bear, they would not listen. They took out their frustrations on Moses. They blamed him for causing all their misery when, the truth was, they had brought it on themselves.

GOD'S GRACE TO BELIEVERS WHO FAIL

Even though the children of Israel failed the Red Sea test, God still rescued them (Ex. 14:21-31). They did not deserve it, but because of His grace, God blessed them anyway.

When the children of Israel realized that they were safe, they celebrated by singing a special song to the Lord. The words are recorded in Ex. 15:1-18. Here is a sample:

Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the LORD,
saying:

“I will sing to the LORD, for He is highly exalted;
The horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea.
The LORD is my strength and song,
And He has become my salvation;
This is my God, and I will praise Him;
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.

The LORD is a warrior;
The LORD is His name.

.....

“Who is like You among the gods, LORD?
Who is like You, majestic in holiness,
Awesome in praises, working wonders?
You reached out with Your right hand,
The earth swallowed them.
In Your [grace] You have led the people whom You have
redeemed;
In Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation.

.....

“You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your
inheritance,
The place, LORD, which You have made as Your dwelling,
The sanctuary, Lord, which Your hands have established.
The LORD shall reign forever and ever.”

Had the children of Israel learned to trust the Lord? The next time they faced adversity, would they pick up and carry the shield of faith? The answer to these questions came three days later when they ran out of fresh water. Ex. 15:22-24 says,

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the [desert] of Shur; and they went three days in the [desert] and found no water. When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, because they were bitter; for that reason it was named Marah [which means “bitter”]. So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, “What are we to drink?”

Their happy celebration was over, the words of their song long forgotten. Instead of responding to the adversity with Bible doctrine, the children of Israel reacted with mental attitude sins, dissociated from doctrine, and returned to their favorite pastime: whining. If they had applied doctrine, they could have kept on celebrating. They could have been confident and happy, looking forward to God's faithful provision. But they did not want to think doctrine. It was much easier to complain.

God heard their grumbling. He saw their failure. Still, He delivered them. Ex. 15:25 says, “Then he [Moses] cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw it into

the waters, and the waters became sweet. There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them.”

The next stop on their journey was Elim, a beautiful oasis with “twelve springs and seventy palm trees” (Ex. 15:27). It was paradise. The pressure was gone, and it was time for rest and relaxation. They had everything they needed: food, water, and Moses’ good Bible teaching. It was a perfect opportunity to prepare for future tests by building spiritual strength. Would they use their time wisely or waste it?

Their next challenge came soon after they left Elim, when their food supply ran low. Ex. 16:1-3 says,

Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the [desert] of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. But the whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the [desert]. The sons of Israel said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread until we were full; for you have brought us out into this [desert] to kill this entire assembly with hunger!”

Instead of growing spiritually strong, the children of Israel were growing weaker. This time they blamed not only Moses, but also his brother Aaron. And their complaints were ridiculous: “We wish we had died in Egypt. At least in Egypt we had plenty to eat. Moses led us here just to watch us starve.”

If God treated people as they deserved, the Jews would have instantly fallen down dead. But His grace is bigger than that. He rescued them. Again. They needed food, and God provided the best: a special “health food” called manna. It contained all the vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients their bodies needed.

God planned to use manna to teach the children of Israel about His faithfulness. He wanted them to learn to relax and trust His provision, one day at a time. In order to use the manna as a teaching aid, God established some rules about the way it should be used. He gave Moses specific instructions, and Moses passed them on to the children of Israel. “God will send manna for six days in a row,” Moses said. “On day six, pick up enough manna for two days, so you can rest on the seventh day (the Sabbath). God will send no manna on the seventh day.”

The instructions were not hard to understand, but the children of Israel still blew it. Ex. 16:20 says, “But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning, and it bred

worms and stank; and Moses was angry with them.” And in Ex. 16:27, “Yet it came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.” They could not follow the rules because they had not learned them. They were not listening when Moses told them what to do. The result? Utter confusion.

The children of Israel learned nothing from the manna episode, but God did not give up on them. As recorded in Ex. 17, He gave them another chance to use the shield of faith. They failed again. And, again, God provided for them in grace. Ex. 17:1-3 says,

Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the [desert] of Sin, according to the command of the LORD, and camped at Rephidim, and there was no water for the people to drink. So the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water so that we may drink!” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?” But the people were thirsty for water there; and they grumbled against Moses and said, “Why is it that you have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?”

Moses was in trouble, but he knew where to go for help: He turned to the Lord. Moses’ conversation with the Lord is found in Ex. 17:4-6.

So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What am I to do with this people? A little more and they will stone me!” Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Unlike the children of Israel, Moses listened to God and obeyed orders. Lifting his staff, he struck the rock, and pure, sparkling water gushed out. It was a beautiful picture of God the Father judging the Lord Jesus Christ for the sins of the world, providing eternal salvation for all. But the spiritual lesson was lost on the children of Israel. They gulped down God’s provision for their bodies and ignored His provision for their souls.

MOSES, THE ONE-MAN PIVOT

As the children of Israel continued their desert journey, they became more stubborn, more rebellious, more resistant to the Word of God. As a client nation to God, they were useless.

The Bible teaches that when the pivot of mature believers in a client nation shrinks, the nation is subject to divine discipline. God punishes client nations in five stages, or cycles (Lev. 26). With each cycle, the national suffering intensifies until, in the fifth cycle, the nation is destroyed.

Client nation Israel easily qualified for the fifth cycle of discipline. Yet God did not destroy it. Why not? Because of Moses. Only Moses put God's Word first in his life. He was a one-man pivot; the survival of Israel depended on him.

The dependence of Israel on the spiritual life of Moses is illustrated in Ex. 17:8-13, when the Jews, who had no military training, fought King Amalek and his army of professional soldiers:

Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." Joshua did just as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. So it came about, when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed; but when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. And Moses' hands were heavy. So they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. So his hands were steady until the sun set. And Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

By placing Moses on a hill with his hands held high, God sent a clear signal to the Jews: They were delivered because of this man's spiritual maturity.

The children of Israel ignored God's message and continued their spiritual decline. Before long, they became so degenerate that at Mount Sinai, God offered to kill them all and start over with Moses.

Then the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and behold, they are an obstinate people. So now leave Me alone, that My anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them; and I will make of you a great nation." (Ex. 32:9-10)

God offered to release Moses from the burden of leading the Jews, but Moses said, "No." Because of his humility and integrity from doctrine in his soul, he asked God to spare the nation:

Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said, "LORD, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians talk, saying, 'With evil motives He brought them out, to kill them on the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and relent of doing harm to Your people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants to whom You swore by Yourself, and said to them, 'I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens, and all this land of which I have spoken I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.'" So the LORD relented of the harm which He said He would do to His people. (Ex. 32:11-14)

On the basis of one man's spiritual life, God delivered an entire nation.

CHALLENGE FOR TODAY

We live in the best country on earth. No nation can match the freedom and opportunity found in the United States of America. Our lifestyle is the envy of the world. The sad thing is, we often take these things for granted. The United States has been so powerful and so privileged for so long, it seems indestructible. But it is not. We must not forget that the five cycles of discipline apply to our nation today, just as they did to client nation Israel.

Our nation is in danger, right now, because American believers are in a spiritual tailspin. As God's warning bells and sirens scream around us, most believers are not listening. They choose to ignore their spiritual responsibilities. They focus on selfish goals instead of opting for God's perfect plan. Meanwhile, our national discipline has begun.

What will happen if we do not change? The Bible says that if we fail to make Bible doctrine top priority, our nation will continue its decline. We will lose our freedoms. We will lose our prosperity. Ultimately, we will lose our nation.

The welfare of the United States does not depend on its wealth, its military, or its political leadership. Human solutions cannot solve our country's problems or reverse its decline. The only true solution is God's solution: Bible doctrine in the souls of believers. Without this, we have no hope.

Right now, today, we must reevaluate our priorities. We must put Bible doctrine first in our lives. We must build spiritual strength to carry the shield of faith, and we must teach our children to do the same. God never destroys a client nation without giving its believers an

opportunity to turn things around. Our opportunity is now. We can join the pivot of positive believers. We can be the reason God delivers the country we love.

The children of Israel never changed. They never let go of their arrogance. They never understood the importance of eternal things. Their lives were a series of disasters, nothing more. Their children suffered. Their nation suffered. They squandered their days in an empty wasteland, and they died never having really lived in the reality of God's promises.

Let us not suffer their fate.

GLOSSARY

client nation – a nation which operates on the principles of establishment from God’s Word; responsible to God for the communication of the gospel and Bible doctrine within its borders, for sending missionaries abroad, and for providing a haven for the Jews.

faith-rest drill – a problem-solving device which enables the believer to think under pressure and solve the problems of worry and anxiety; we claim promises and rationales from the Word of God, mix them with faith, and reach conclusions that give us rest in trusting the faithfulness of God.

±H – the perfect happiness of God and a problem-solving device for the mature believer; God shares with the mature believer His perfect happiness, a happiness that is not based on circumstances or temporal relationships.

personal love for God – a problem-solving device that provides motivational virtue for all true function in the Christian way of life; developed through consistent study of the Word of God, and based on knowledge and understanding of who and what God is and what He has provided in grace for mankind.

pivot – the core of spiritually mature believers who become the preserving factor within a nation.

problem-solving device – God the Father has provided the believer with ten problem-solving devices that enable him to overcome the problems of life, continue his spiritual growth, and execute God’s plan for his life. (See Appendix.)

protocol plan – God’s plan as outlined in the mandates of the Word of God for the Church Age believer, requiring that a right thing be done in a right way.

rebound – a problem-solving device that enables the believer to solve the problem of personal sin after salvation; as described in 1 John 1:9, we name our known sins to God the Father, who immediately forgives and restores us to fellowship through the filling of the Spirit.

unconditional love – a problem-solving device that provides functional virtue in the Christian way of life and enables the believer to solve people problems; unconditional love is based on the integrity and humility of the one who loves; a relaxed mental attitude, devoid of mental attitude sins, motivated by a personal love for God.

virtue love – both personal love for God the Father (motivational virtue) and unconditional love for all mankind (functional virtue).

APPENDIX

The Ten Problem-Solving Devices

There is no such thing as a problem in life that does not have a solution in the Word of God. The problem-solving devices are how you relate doctrine to your experience. This is how the believer can execute the Plan of God in his life and how sharing the happiness of God becomes a reality in his life.

The problem-solving devices provide the means of winning the four great battles in your soul:

1. The battle of stress in the soul.
2. The battle of sin in the soul.
3. The battle of false doctrine in the soul.
4. The battle of wrong solutions or false variables of the soul, including defense mechanisms.

The problem-solving devices function to prevent the outside pressure of adversity from becoming the inside pressure of stress in the soul.

The problem-solving devices function to provide the God-given spiritual environment for your soul.

Problem-Solving Device Number One: The Rebound Technique

Rebound is the recovery of the filling of the Holy Spirit, without which there is no functioning spiritual life. The Rebound Technique is also the means by which the believer maintains fellowship with God.

Personal sin breaks fellowship with God and grieves or quenches the Holy Spirit. Confession or acknowledgement of that sin to God restores fellowship and recovers the filling of the Spirit.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)

Problem-Solving Device Number Two: The Filling of the Holy Spirit

The filling of the Spirit (F/S) refers to the controlling ministry of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the believer after he has used Rebound. The F/S is the status of spirituality, in contrast to carnality, which is old sin nature (OSN) control of the soul.

Eph. 5:18 “...be filled with the Spirit” and Gal. 5:16 “...walk by the Spirit” give us the positive commands related to the F/S.

When the believer is filled with the Spirit, whatever he is doing becomes divine production in his life and, therefore, glorifies God.

Problem-Solving Device Number Three: The Faith-Rest Drill

The faith-rest drill is the means of claiming the promises of God and applying them to your experience. We can utilize promises in both the Old and New Testaments. The faith-rest drill is also the means of application of Bible doctrine to experience. As a problem-solving device, the faith-rest drill becomes the means of maintaining a calm, relaxed mental attitude even in the trying circumstances of life.

The technique of the faith-rest drill involves mixing the promises of God with faith. This results in “entering His rest” (Heb. 4:1, 10-11). Therefore, the believer is able to experience poise, confidence, assurance, and stability even in times of turmoil and pressure.

Problem-Solving Device Number Four: Grace Orientation

Grace, as “unmerited favor,” is God’s policy in dealing with mankind. It is the policy that He uses to sustain and regulate our lives under His perfect plan. Grace Orientation is, therefore, the believer making God’s policy of grace his own policy in dealing with the relationships and circumstances of life.

Grace Orientation, as a problem-solving device, is when the believer learns to rely on and apply God’s grace to his life.

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the multifaceted grace of God. (1 Pet. 4:10)

Problem-Solving Device Number Five: Doctrinal Orientation

Doctrinal Orientation is the believer embracing the values and standards of the Word of God as his own so that the principles of Bible doctrine become the basis for his life. Doctrinal Orientation produces confidence in the various circumstances of life as the believer makes decisions compatible with the divine viewpoint of Scripture.

Doctrinal Orientation is the fulfillment of the command, “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:5)

Problem-Solving Device Number Six: A Personal Sense of Destiny

Having a Personal Sense of Destiny means that the believer is aware of who he is, why he is here, and where he is going. In other words, it means that he has great confidence in and about his life, in both his present and his future life.

A Personal Sense of Destiny, with its confidence based on the Word of God, brings the realization of purpose and direction to the believer's life in time.

Paul said in Phil. 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain [profit]," as an expression of his personal sense of destiny.

Problem-Solving Device Number Seven: Personal Love for God the Father

Personal love for God is the expression of the believer's attraction to and appreciation of who and what God is. Personal love for God as a problem-solving device becomes the reason, the motivation for all that he does.

Personal love for God, therefore, becomes the motivational virtue of the spiritual life and is referred to as the "Greatest Commandment." (Matt. 22:37-38)

Problem-Solving Device Number Eight: Unconditional Love for Mankind

Unconditional love for man is an unconditional love by which the believer fulfills his own personal responsibilities in his life and circumstances, regardless of what others may think or do. This unconditional love is based on Personal Love for God and integrity from doctrine in the soul. Therefore, it becomes the functional virtue for the spiritual life.

Unconditional love toward many is called the "Royal Law" in James 2:8, quoted from Lev. 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Problem-Solving Device Number Nine: Sharing the Happiness of God

This becomes the believer's experience regardless of the circumstances when he continues to be filled with the Spirit, in fellowship with God, and to apply the principles of God's Word to his life. Sharing the Happiness of God solves the problem of the major pursuit in everyone's life. This problem-solving device allows the believer to live in the reality of the Lord's happiness being made complete in him.

These things I have spoken to you so that My joy [happiness] may be in you, and that your joy [happiness] may be made full [complete]. (John 15:11)

Problem-Solving Device Number Ten: Occupation with Christ

Occupation with Christ is maximum God-emphasis over self- and people-emphasis. It is the basic objective of the spiritual life and reflects maturity in the spiritual realm, in that the believer does not allow people and circumstances to control his life.

Occupation with Christ is the result of consistently applying the previous problem-solving devices and thereby becoming victorious and a winner in all the contingencies of life.

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Heb. 12:3)

And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. (1 Pet. 1:8)

PROBLEM-SOLVING DEVICES FOR SPIRITUAL WINNERS⁶

GROWTH PHASE	AREA OF TESTING	BELIEVER'S PROBLEM	APPROACH (Spiritual Lifestyle)	SOLUTION (Problem-Solving Device)
CHILDHOOD	GOD'S PROVISION	PERSONAL SIN	FAITH	REBOUND 1 John 1:9
		PRODUCTION (Spiritual)		FILLING OF THE SPIRIT Eph. 5:18
		POISE (Thinking under Pressure)		FAITH-REST Heb. 4:1, 10-11
ADOLESCENCE	GOD'S PURPOSE	POLICY (Pattern of Life)	HOPE (Confidence)	GRACE ORIENTATION James 4:6
		PRIORITY (Scale of Values)		DOCTRINAL ORIENTATION Rom. 12:2
		PURPOSE IN LIFE		PERSONAL SENSE OF DESTINY Phil. 1:21
ADULTHOOD	GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE	PERFORMANCE (Motivation)	LOVE	PERSONAL LOVE FOR GOD Deut. 6:5; 1 Pet. 1:8
		(Function)		UNCONDITIONAL LOVE FOR MAN James 2:8
		PURSUIT IN LIFE (Happiness, Contentment)		SHARING GOD'S HAPPINESS John 15:11
		PERSPECTIVE (Overall)		OCCUPATION WITH CHRIST Heb. 12:1-3; Eph. 3:19

⁶ Chart designed by Pete Daughtry

God's Problem-Solving Devices⁷

by Janice Minton

The Rebound Technique found in 1 John 1:9
Removes Personal Sin and leaves it behind.

Spirituality results from Ephesians 5:18
And Divine Production from the believer is seen.

Faith-Rest follows based on Hebrews 4:1,
Providing Poise when we are under the gun.

Grace Orientation learned from James 4:6
Forms the Pattern for Life and every problem will fix.

Doctrinal Orientation, found in Romans 12:2,
Makes Bible Doctrine #1 for me and for you.

A Personal Sense of Destiny, from Philippians 1:21,
Shows us Life's Purpose...the Angelic Conflict is won!

Personal Love for God the Father, Deuteronomy 6:5,
Is the Believer's Motivation for staying alive.

Unconditional Love for Man, as in James 2:8,
Allows function toward others to be kept straight.

Sharing God's Happiness, see John 15:11,
Produces contentment only exceeded in heaven.

Occupation with our Lord, Ephesians 3:19,
Gives us Perspective on all we have seen.

God's Problem-Solving Devices provide our capability
To have Self-Confidence, Independence, and Invincibility.

⁷ Used by permission.



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