

# 11

## Saying “Yes” to Life

If we don’t say “Yes” to our life, we might just go through the motions of living. Trying to do what we think we were supposed to do. Trying to fulfill somebody else’s dream. Trying to do something in order to prove something. Trying to obtain love or find security. I am sure you can think of other reasons why people do not say “yes” to living their life.

Living our own life is difficult and challenging. It is not easy; it takes great courage and boldness. But if we don’t do it, we will never discover our own true self and fulfill our unique divine purpose, using the gifts and talents God created us with. At certain points in our life, we probably will experience what I call the three D’s: disgust, depression, and despair.

Take a look at what Morris West wrote in his novel about the election of a Ukrainian pope and Vatican politics.

It takes so much to be a full human being that there are very few who have the enlightenment or the courage to pay the price. One has to abandon altogether the search for security and reach out to the risk of living with both arms. One has to accept pain as a condition of existence. — *The Shoes of the Fisherman*<sup>76</sup>

### About Our Human Development

It used to be assumed that most of our development stopped when our bodies reached their adult size and when we graduated from high school. But that view has changed. We now know that the process of the unfolding of the personality does not only occur in infancy or through adolescence but continues over our entire life, from infancy to old age — if we choose it.

Depth psychologists describe human development as the process of becoming the complete and whole human being we were created to be, waking up to our total self, and allowing our conscious awareness to develop until it includes all of the basic elements that were inherent in us when we were born.

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<sup>76</sup> *The Shoes of the Fisherman* is a novel by the Australian writer Morris West published in 1963. The novel concerns the election of a Ukrainian pope, and is a dissection of Vatican politics.

I agree with them, but I might add: a growing awareness of the power and life of God within us. It is an awakening on the many levels of our existence here on earth and perhaps in the heavenlies where Christ is seated.

We are much bigger than what our little ego sees. Ask yourself, why are there so many references to waking up in the Bible? Why does Jesus say, “Seeing, we see not?” What are these Scriptures trying to help us see?

This is the reason I speak to the crowds in parables: because while [having the power of] seeing they do not see, and while [having the power of] hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand and grasp [spiritual things] (Matthew 13:13, Amplified Bible),

For this reason, it says, ‘Awake, sleeper, And arise from the dead, And Christ will shine [dawn] on you’ (Ephesians 5:14).

Note St. Paul is writing to the believers in Ephesus, not unbelievers.

## ***Life is a journey***

We need to recognize that our life’s journey carries within it the potential for growth and development on all levels – body, soul, and spirit. At our birth there is available to each one of us a range of psychological strengths and resources. At the start of our lives, these strengths exist in potential. Only gradually over the course of our life are these resources realized as consistent characteristics of our conscious (aware) personality.

It might help to think of the caterpillar’s journey. It begins life crawling along the ground, but through the process of time, it becomes a butterfly, free to fly in the air. But know this: that caterpillar had everything it needed in order to be transformed into a butterfly. It didn’t lack anything!

In his extremely popular book, *The Road Less Traveled*, Psychiatrist Scott Peck<sup>77</sup> says most people stop growing and exploring the mystery of life very early in their adulthood. And by the end of middle age they have given up the fight! Why is this?

Is it because the process of growth is a complex and arduous and lifelong task, requiring a healthy spiritual connection to the One who created us? Remember what German psychiatrist Dr. Lechler discovered: his patients could get not better unless “they had a healthy dialogue with a loving Heavenly Father.”

## ***The path of life***

The Bible promises that the Lord will lead us to the path of life.

You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand (Psalm 16:11).

And it explains the New Covenant is written in our heart by the Spirit of God.

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

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<sup>77</sup> Peck, *The Road Less Traveled*

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and I will write them upon their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people (Hebrews 8:10).

I like how Norman Vincent Peale<sup>78</sup> explains the adventure of human development. But I would add that it is not just me, myself alone, but once we experience the new birth, it is me in union with the Spirit of Christ in me.

It is the process of discovering our own self and then learning how to let our personalities loose upon the world for the sheer adventure of our full development and in the prayerful hope that we may in our own way lift the level of humanity. – Norman Vincent Peale

*Have you ever experienced the joy of using your gifts and talents?*

## **God’s great goal: our wholeness**

My friend, Rev. Herman Riffel,<sup>79</sup> taught me that one of God's great goals is to make us whole. Our Heavenly Father has created us with an inborn urge to grow and develop into the whole and complete person we were designed to be.

Here are some Scriptures that helped me begin to understand God’s great desire for us. Take your time with them, asking God for insight into their meaning for you.

Now may the God of peace sanctify [make holy, purify, consecrate] you entirely [whole-complete, through and through; absolutely perfect—draws attention to the several parts which constitute a person]; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved [to guard—from loss or injury; prob. by keeping the eyes upon] complete [complete in every part; perfectly sound, entire] blameless [without blame, without faults] unto [indicating the point reached or entered] the coming [a being near, to be near, presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thes 5:23).

Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health [healthy, sound, in good health—whole], just as your soul prospers [transparent, translucent—cleanse, be clear] (3 John 2).

Set your mind *and* keep focused *habitually* on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears [uncovered], then you also will appear [be uncovered] with Him in glory (Colossians 3:2-4, *Amplified Bible*).

Leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity [*teleios*] (Heb 6:1).

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature [*teleios*] man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ (Eph 4:13).

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<sup>78</sup> Norman Vincent Peale (1898-1993) was pastor of Marble Collegiate Church on 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Manhattan for 52 years and one of the most influential religious figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He popularized the concept of positive thinking in his book *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

<sup>79</sup> Rev. Herman Riffel (? -2009) personal conversations with Herman and in his seminars on dreams. He published several books for Christians on dreams and wrote the forward to my first book on dreams, *Dream Treasure, Learning the Language of Heaven*.

Note: Maturity translated from the Greek is *teleios*, which refers to arriving at the point aimed at; i.e., maturity, fulfillment, completion. Think of it like this: the little acorn is called to become a mature oak tree; then we can say it has fulfilled its purpose.

## **What does it mean to be whole?**

You might ask, what does wholeness look like or feel like? Here is how a dictionary defines wholeness:

16. Complete organization of parts
17. Sound, all together, complete, through and through
18. Not diseased, defective, intact
19. Containing all its parts, elements
20. Entire, total, complete
21. Not divided up, undivided
22. Uninjured, unbroken, unimpaired

## **First the natural, then the spiritual**

Another way to help us understand the goal of our journey is to consider your child and what it is you want for him or her. I actually did this; I made a list of what I wanted for my sons. It helped me begin to grasp what God has in mind for us, His children.

Do you remember what St. Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Corinth?

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:46).

We can learn much about the spiritual journey God calls us to, by considering the natural journey. Remember, Jesus often used things in the natural world to help us understand the spiritual realm, including the Kingdom of God.

### ***The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed***

The Kingdom is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all others seeds; but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants, and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches (Matthew 13:31-32).

One of the most important images Jesus used to describe His Father’s kingdom is the image of growth. The kingdom of heaven begins in our life as something seemingly small and insignificant, a tiny seed, but through the process of growth it becomes a mighty power. The tree is rooted in the earth but reaches up to heaven, so the unfolding of our personality includes both our natural (earthly) and spiritual journey.

### ***The kingdom of God is like leaven or yeast***

It is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three pecks of meal, until it was all leavened (Matthew 13:33).

Yeast is seemingly insignificant in itself, yet without yeast the bread remains flat and unfinished. So the kingdom of heaven is the reality in our life which causes our whole personality, as well as the outer fabric of our life, to achieve completeness.

The inner growth potential is often regarded as small, insignificant, and valueless, while the important things are said to be outside of ourselves. Yet it is through the acceptance of the inner power at work within us that our lives rise and we become fulfilled.

## ***We need the Holy Spirit***

Because we inherited a corrupted seed from Adam, every one of us has been wounded in some way that affects our relationship with the people around us and with our Creator. This is the work of the Holy Spirit, to heal us on the inside, setting us free from lies and healing our wounds.

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn (Isaiah 61:1-2),

Inner healing is rooted in the work of Jesus on the cross, His death and resurrection, His shed blood, and the forgiveness of sins. But healing is initiated and orchestrated by the Holy Spirit. God heals through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The essential action, that which differentiates inner healing from psychological methodologies, is the action of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit points us to the Presence of our Lord who is there. We look with the eyes of the heart and receive from Him that healing word, glance, or presence we've needed for so long. We forgive others their darkest sins against us, and He forgives us our sins. We receive from Him who manifests the very love of God the Father the healing grace we've been unable to receive before (Leanne Payne<sup>80</sup>).

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life (John 6:63).

We named our non-profit organization “Kairos Ministries, Inc.” because redemptive and restorative experiences by the Holy Spirit depend upon the right environment and the opportune time, in the sense of the Greek word, *Kairos*. These events cannot be forced. In the fullness of time ... when our soul is prepared, they seem to "just happen," and are something quite miraculous, spiritual, and divine.

Catholic lay evangelist, Ralph Nault<sup>81</sup>, said, “In the journey to wholeness, the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit working within us is perhaps more important than the laying on of hands, the inner healing prayers, and the gifts of the Spirit, etc. We cannot come into the place of maturity and wholeness that God wants us to without the Holy Spirit. We have to have the Holy Spirit there to usher us into it.”

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<sup>80</sup> Leanne Payne (1932-2015) was founder of Pastoral Care Ministries and was active in the ministry of healing prayer for more than forty years. She authored many articles and books, including *Restoring the Christian Soul*, and *Listening Prayer*

<sup>81</sup> Ralph Nault (1932-2022) was an author, speaker, and spiritual father to many. He wrote and taught extensively on how to be led by the Holy Spirit. He shared insights for our spiritual journey in <https://www.ralphnault.com/blog>

## Wounded pilgrims

Because we grow up in a world where there was not always the love and light required to affirm us as a person, hurts can interrupt the developmental process and cause us to remain stuck in some aspect of our development.

We can recognize these hurts through our behavior patterns – our feelings, attitudes, and emotions. We carry not just past memories but the pain associated with some of those memories.

Become aware when you have an excessive reaction to some situation, then ask the Lord to reveal its underlying roots that may go way back to our childhood. The patterns of our family and parents do affect the way we relate to others and especially to God.

For instance, because of painful experiences with their earthly fathers – like being lied to – some people find it difficult to relate to God as a loving Father. They may have a more affectionate relationship with Jesus’ mother, Mary. The Linns<sup>82</sup> suggest it is because the mother was the center of affection in the home, not the distant “macho” father. What do you think of these ideas?

In my own experience and in listening to others, I believe God created us with a need to have a loving Father. Remember My Story in #10, *Love of Life Vs. Love of Death*, when a man lovingly held me in his arms, while he sang baby songs to me and said, “You have a daddy now.”

## Do you want to be here?

Here is something that may help you understand any resistance to saying “Yes” to your life. In his research, Dr. Emerson,<sup>83</sup> together with the Linns, contributed to a major paradigm shift in the field of birth psychology. They found that the origin of wounding begins not in childhood but rather at the first moment of our existence.

It seems that God knows us from eternity. I do not know in what state we were before we began our journey on earth, but the Bible makes it clear that somehow God knew us before we were born. God has known us intimately from all eternity, even if we were not yet conscious beings ourselves.

I know it challenges us to think about where we were before we were born, but consider the meaning of this Scripture:

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you came to birth, I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations (Jer 1:4-5, *World English Bible*).

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<sup>82</sup> The Linn brothers were Jesuit priests who together with Sheila Fabricant were early authors and practitioners of inner healing in the Roman Catholic Church. Later Dennis married Sheila and they began to minister together around the world: <https://www.linnministries.org/new-page>.

<sup>83</sup> William R. Emerson, Ph.D. is a teacher, writer, and leader in the field of birth psychology. Together with Sheila, Dennis and Mathew Linn, they co-authored *Remembering Our Home: Healing Hurts & Receiving Gifts from Conception to Birth* (Paulist Press, 1999), p. 14.

The Hebrew word that we translate as “knew” is *yada*, which refers to the deepest possible intimacy in which one knows the most hidden part of a person. According to God’s word, God knew every part of us before we were formed in our mother’s womb.

*Do you think your Creator knew you before you were formed in the womb?*

## **We do not choose to come here!**

I do not believe that we have a choice about coming here to earth. The only person who could choose if he was willing to come into a body was Jesus Christ, not us.

However, we do have opinions and feelings about the fact that we are here. Many people say that they wish they never had been born. Others wish they could die and go to God now. Some do not believe they have a purpose in being here. They never have accepted the fact that they have a life to live here on earth.

The basis for a happy life is to be at peace with God as the one who created us and with our own earthly existence.

## **Developmental issue**

If you are reluctant to say “Yes” to life, here is something to think about that may help explain your resistance. In Emerson’s experience with clients, he found that one of the main development issues was in leaving the heart of God in order to be born in a body. He has identified three different types of responses to this journey here on earth.

### **1. Feel happy to be here**

In the first group are people who recall a willingness to be conceived. They feel little or no disconnection from God and are glad to be here. Emerson says about 10 percent of people are in this category.

Such people tend to live happy lives, full of love and caring, with relatively little struggle. They seem very connected to their life’s destiny and often achieve great things. Singleness of purpose and of life is characteristic of them.

### **2. Feel they have a special purpose**

In the second group, about 60 to 70 percent report they knew that it was in their best interest to be conceived and that there was a special purpose for their life here on earth. But at the same time, they say they felt reluctant to leave their life with God. Thus, their process of incorporating into a body, of being in a womb, and of living on earth is marked by feeling a separation from, and a longing for, God.

Emerson calls this longing *divine homesickness*. He suggests, “When divine homesickness remains unconscious and unresolved, life may seem gray and lacking in meaning, and they may be more susceptible to various forms of depression.”

### **3. Feel they don’t belong here**

In the third group, about 20 to 30 percent report feeling exiled or cast out of heaven. They feel that they don’t belong here on earth, unless it is with other misfits. They may

even feel anger or rage at their Creator! But the real danger for them is that their anger and rage can be turned inward against themselves, causing them to feel like “cast outs” who are innately bad or wrong.

Emerson notes, “Their consciousness may polarize into good and evil, resulting in a deep sense of shame and guilt. They often suffer with a variety of problems like attachment and bonding disorders.”

The authors provide numerous spiritual and healing exercises for people who sense they need help with this developmental issue.

## Spiritual Maturity and Wholeness

Sometimes I ask people how old they feel on the inside. Interestingly, some say they still feel like a little child on the inside, even though they are nearly fifty years old.

*How mature do you feel on the inside?*

### ***Spiritually mature but emotionally immature?***

Pastor Peter Scazzero<sup>84</sup> discovered there is a link between emotional health, relational depth, and spiritual maturity, because of what he experienced both in his congregation and in his own self and marriage. In his book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, he shined new light on what it takes to become whole and emotionally mature in Christ.

It seems to me that the journey to wholeness involves allowing the light of God to shine deep inside us. When we do this, here are fourteen things we may become aware that we need to do:

- 1) Take a deep, hard look inside our hearts.
- 2) Become painfully honest.
- 3) Recognize what we are feeling and doing, as well as the motivations of our heart.
- 4) Dedicate ourselves to truth at all cost.
- 5) Break the power of the past.
- 6) Allow God to re-parent us through the body of Christ.
- 7) Live in humility (brokenness and vulnerability).
- 8) Embrace the gift of limits.
- 9) Ask bigger life-related “why” questions.
- 10) Make peace with grief and loss.
- 11) Learn to listen to others.
- 12) Forgive all the people who hurt us.
- 13) Love people with Christ’s love.
- 14) Receive God’s grace in times of need.

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<sup>84</sup> Pastor Peter Scazzero (?) published *The Emotionally Healthy Church* in 2003. After pastoring New Life Fellowship in Queens, New York, for years, he co-founded the ministry called Emotionally Healthy Discipleship, focusing on transforming church cultures.



I don't share this as a list for you to check off, but to help you understand the inner depths that the Spirit of God wants to work at. His goal is the transformation of your core identity, not adaptation to what is expected of you, nor trying harder to get it right.

Our loving Creator sent the Holy Spirit to be our Helper in this journey. It is my testimony that we can trust our Creator God to lead us in the path of life, *if we say “yes” to the One who created us in His image.*

✦ *Do you want to experience the whole, better, abundant life that God created for you?*

## **Do you want to be whole?**

Jesus asked some really important questions during his ministry on earth. This is certainly one of them: “*Do you want to be whole?*” (John 5:6 KJV). Why do you think he would ask this to an invalid who had been thirty-eight years in his sickness?

One author explains that the answer is in His choice of Greek words. When Jesus was healing and doing miracles, he used the Greek word *sozo*, which means “saved” or “healed.” But with this particular man who had been sick for such a long time, the Greek word he used was *hugies*, which means “whole,” “healthy,” and “sound.”

Why do you think He used a different Greek word? Consider the idea that the invalid's family had put him out there to beg alms from the people who came in and out of that gate. Perhaps they were using his physical problem to support them. He certainly could not have gotten there by himself.

This is a great question for each of us today: *Do you want to be whole?* We all have things in our lives that hinder us and keep us from the life God wants us to live. Are you willing to let the Lord Jesus deal with those things in His way and time, and enable you to become the person God intended for you to be? If your answer is *yes*, then it is time to surrender your life to Him and make Him the Lord of your life.

### ***Are you willing to make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life?***

Take time to do some business with your Creator right now. Tell him that you are choosing to make his Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord of your life, turning the reins of your life over to him.

## **Make Jesus Lord of your life**

Once we know that we have made Him our Lord, we can choose life, and our own particular unique life. We can experience ourselves as fundamentally good because of the gift of righteousness Jesus Christ offers us. Then we are able to perceive everybody else that way too – through His eyes of love.

Such hope [in God's promises] never disappoints us, because God's love has been abundantly poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:5, *Amplified Bible*).

But God clearly shows *and* proves His own love for us, by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8, *Amplified Bible*).

At the heart of personality is the need to feel a sense of being lovable, without having to qualify for that acceptance. I am convinced that nine out of every ten persons seeing a psychiatrist do not need one. They need someone who will love them with God's love ... and they will get well. (Unknown)

## **Saying “yes” to your life**

When you say “Yes” to God, you are saying “Yes” to your life, even with all of its problems and difficulties.

Over the years of ministry, I have often invited people to cup their hands as if they are holding their individual life in them; then hold it up to God, saying, “I choose to accept my life. I say *yes* to my life, even with all its difficulties.” At times, I have seen how very difficult this is for some people, because they are experiencing some kind of resistance in them.

***What do you think the source of that resistance is?***

### **Here are some ideas to help you see what is going on inside you:**

What does your day-to-day life feel like if you are living it with a “no”?

What is this resistance in being here about for you?

What are those feelings about?

Can you write out what this resistance feels like to you?

Can you express through drawing what this resistance feels like?

Write down the feelings you had when you woke up this morning.

Look at a feeling that is still alive in you right now. What is the feeling that is alive?

### ***Did you want to be born?***

If you have a good imagination, here is an exercise that may help you:

Close your eyes and breathe deeply.

Imagine yourself in a safe and welcoming birthplace.

Now imagine yourself going all the way back to the beginning of your existence in the heart of God.

Ask yourself, “*Do I want to come?*” Listen within your whole being for the answer.

If your answer is “yes,” imagine yourself coming into this world, enfolded in the loving light of God. Ask yourself, *what would help me enter even more fully into this life?*

Imagine yourself receiving what you need as you breathe in God’s creative and loving light.

If your answer is “no,” ask yourself: “*What would help me to become willing to come here?*” Perhaps you will think of a special person whose love has helped you, a safe place in nature, an activity that gives your life meaning, and so on. Whatever your answer,

imagine yourself receiving what you need as you breathe in God’s creative and living light.

*I make a decision to say “yes” to my life, instead of “no.”*

## The Law of Surrender and Acceptance

I first came across the power of the law of surrender and acceptance from Catherine Marshall.<sup>85</sup> I think it was in her book, *Something More: In Search of A Deeper Faith*, where she wrote about her struggle to heal from tuberculosis. She was in a sanatorium for some time, but healing was not taking place.

Finally, one day she came to the place where she simply surrendered her problem to her Creator God. You can guess what happened! She began to rapidly heal and soon returned to her life again.

Shortly after this, I came across the writings of Dr. Paul Tournier,<sup>86</sup> and he enriched my understanding of this spiritual law or principle. In his book, *The Healing of Persons*, he writes the following. I encourage you to take his words to heart and apply them in your life. You won’t be disappointed!

Rebellion weakens the forces of life and healing within us. Acceptance of our diseases, our infirmities and the limitations imposed upon us by our nature and the circumstances of our existence, is the condition of that inner harmony which can play a decisive part in maintaining physical and moral health.

From the miracles that are wrought through acceptance, it can be seen that spiritual strength is the greatest strength in the world. It can transform both peoples and individuals. It alone can ensure victory over the negative forces of selfishness, hate, fear, and disorder, which destroy peoples and undermine the health of individuals. It alone gives the joy, energy, and zeal needed in the battle for life and for the defense of health.

Tournier explains that this acceptance of our life does not mean resignation; neither does it mean that we will run away from the struggle. It simply means that we accept it as it comes, with all the handicaps of heredity, of suffering, of psychological complexes and injustices. Acceptance is saying an active “yes” to life, an ability to affirm our life as a response of our total personality.

I memorized Tournier’s words and began to do what he said. And it worked! Sometimes not right away, but at some point I experienced God’s response. I could share many stories about how it worked in my life, but the key is to be sure your acceptance is true. We cannot try to convince God that we have done it, because He knows our hearts.

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<sup>85</sup> Catherine Marshall LeSourd (1914-1983) was an American author of nonfiction, inspirational, and fiction works. She was the wife of well-known minister Peter Marshall.

<sup>86</sup> Tournier, *The Healing of Persons*.

I remember a day when my teenage son was very rude to me and I wanted to respond in kind. But the Holy Spirit said *don't*. So I completely surrendered this situation to God. A few minutes later, my son came to me and apologized! This incident happened over thirty-five years ago, and I still remember it!

Another much bigger situation happened, and it was more difficult to surrender. But finally I did. It will take too long to write it all out; perhaps I will tell it later. But when we truly accept something, I think we are releasing a bit of faith. We are letting God have it, and we are putting our trust in Him and His power. And, yes, sometimes it really does hurt to let go, because in some way a death of our will and our desires are involved.

*As you read the following, ask the Lord to show you what you need to accept or make peace with.*

## **Acceptance of our self, a key to happiness**

I must agree to be the person who I am.

I must agree to have the qualifications, gifts, and talents which I have.

I must agree to live within the limitations set for me.

### **Here are general categories of things we need to accept:**

Living – one of the most important factors in healing.

Our weakness & failures.

Wounds, our pain, our anger.

Our lack, our deprivation.

Our self-centeredness.

Guilt and our fears.

Mistakes, our wrong choices.

Rage, our self-hatred.

Our laziness.

Neuroses, i.e., our compulsions, obsessions, phobias.

Our parents: their failings, their psychological make-up, their illnesses, their social class; our heredity and ancestors.

Our families.

Our place in society.

Our children: their temperaments, failings, character, and their sex.

Social stigmas.

### **Some more things we need to accept**

Our sex, celibacy, menopause.

Our own bodies, our physical make-up, our digestive and nervous systems.

The passage of time and the loss of youth.

Growing old, of the limitations called for by our age.

Changes in customs as time passes.

New things: computers, cell phones, etc.

Reverses of fortune, injustices.

Sins of others which cause us suffering.

Our fellow workers.

The country in which we live.

## ***Accept responsibility for your life***

Saying “yes” to life enables us to become the author of our life and not the victim in it. It is the role of a counselor or spiritual mentor to lead their clients to an acceptance of responsibility for the conduct and outcome of their life.

Living with this feeling of choice is the key distinguishing factor between victims and authors.

It is much easier to be in the position of a victim than in that of a person conscious of his or her choices and responsibilities, and of the gifts he or she is endowed with. – Tournier

## **Making Life-Enhancing Choices**

*How can we know if something brings life or death?*

Not sure where I learned the following, but I think it will help you reflect on your choices.

If what you are doing enhances your ability to live.

If it enables you to work more effectively, love more beauty, or appreciate the things around you, then it is life-giving.

If it allows you to grow, change, and expand, then it is bringing you life.

### **Discover your motives**

Another way to discern if what you are doing is life-giving is to discover the real motives underlying your choice. Often the motives in our heart may be hidden from us. We are blind to our motives that are self-serving, not acceptable, or even not nice.

For instance, we might say to someone, “*I did this because I love you.*” But the hidden motive may actually corrupt what we say. The real motive can pollute the action, giving it an aroma of death, not life.

To grow in our “aliveness” we must come to know our motives. We must examine them and acknowledge them to ourselves and to God. We must bring them to the light; then they are not able to undermine our actions.

If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth (James 5:14).

It is not unusual for me to discover that I have mixed motives about something. I do have a life-giving reason for why I am doing something, but I have discovered there can be a bit that is self-serving, trying to feed my ego. For me, the key is that I am honest with myself and with God. He already knows it and is ready to give me mercy and grace.

### **Put animation into your daily work**

Another thing is to take an immense pleasure in all that you are doing. Practice liking it. Change your attitudes. If you are alive in the fullest sense, you will get enjoyment out of your activity, because aliveness stimulates the sense of excitement.

Can you say “yes” to that thing you want to do from your heart? Our attitude toward life is always a reflection of our attitude toward God. So whatever you are doing, do it with your whole heart.

### **Do you have peace in your heart?**

We need to become aware of whether or not we have peace in our heart about something we want to do. The peace that Jesus gives will guide us in making decisions. If we don't have any peace in our heart, then it is better not to do it.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid (John 14:27).

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful (Colossians 3:15).

Here is how the *Amplified Bible* translates this Scripture:

“Let the peace of Christ [the inner calm of one who walks daily with Him] be the controlling factor in your hearts [deciding and settling questions that arise]. To this *peace* indeed you were called as members in one body [of believers]. And be thankful [to God always].”

### **Set our eyes on Jesus**

We need to do what the Bible says: look to Jesus, setting our eyes on Him. Our peace lies in looking to the Lord, not to ourselves. We rest on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, not on our own shifting experiences, feelings, and thoughts. We are delivered from our fallen nature to the degree that we look unto Him.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:2).

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Set your mind *and* keep focused *habitually* on the things above [the heavenly things], not on things that are on the earth [which have only temporal value]. For you died [to this world], and your [new, real] life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, appears [uncovered], then you also will appear [be uncovered] with Him in glory (Colossians 3:2-4, *Amplified Bible*).

## My Story

I asked my husband to share some inner healing experiences he had some years ago. Here is how he titled them: *I have the emotional resources for living.*

### Awakening moment

I was at a retreat house with people who are very close to me. Late one evening, from the third floor I looked down the stairwell to the lobby and saw Judith engaged in a warm, animated discussion with a couple friends. I felt the following: *overwhelmed, frustrated, inadequate, disarrayed, impaired, powerless.*

That evening I finally articulated to myself what I have felt deep inside about many of my interpersonal relationships and various situations where I felt inadequate and frustrated: *“I lack the emotional resources.”*

As I lay on my bed praying about this feeling, I asked the Lord where this all began for me. Suddenly in my imagination I saw a scene from when I was 17 years old where I felt very inadequate in a group. When I asked the Lord if this problem began earlier, he took me in my imagination back to when I was 6 years old. Briefly I saw an image of myself at 6 years old in the kitchen, and my mother is standing with her back to me.

### Back story

For most of my life, I could not connect emotionally. For many years I had simply said that I didn’t care. And if you were hurting, I said (to myself), “don’t confuse me with someone who cares.”

In a circle of people, I felt most comfortable sliding my chair a few inches back from the arc of the circle. I wanted to relate but didn’t know how.

Finally, this started to change, as I began to long for connection to other people. However, I did not know how to achieve it. For several months I could feel this longing inside, but could not describe it or do anything about it.

### Healing begins

The image of my mother in the kitchen worked inside me for several months as I prayed, *Lord, please heal me of this feeling of inadequacy.*

### First stage of my healing

On a wonderful day of healing, the emotional inadequacy feeling that was deeply rooted in me was exposed, and I was healed. As we gathered in my living room to pray and ask God for his solution for me, Judith and some friends used trigger words like “overwhelmed” and “frustrated,” and suddenly I saw in my imagination the following scene:

*My mother has her back to me, agonizing over the death of her 5-day old son. She is crying (I sense), at least extremely sad, and I feel overwhelmed. Here and now, in my own living room at age 59, I experience once again the pain and I (the six-year-old me) weep and wail, “I don’t know*

*what to do!” My mother is lost in her own misery, and I burst out, “Somebody needs to help her, but I don’t know what to do.”*

**Lie 1: I am powerless. I don’t know what to do (powerlessness).**

In the middle of the pain, Judith asked me if I could find Jesus in the scene.

*There He is, sitting cross-legged on the floor, playing with my toys! He smiles and beckons me to come to Him (no words), and I go to sit on His lap. He comforts me as a Father would comfort his child. It feels wonderful, reassuring. My sense is that I am not required to do anything! It isn’t my job to do anything.*

Ever since then I have been aware of feeling much more emotionally connected to others. I am comfortable in situations where I had previously felt withdrawn, and in general I feel a sense of self confidence and assurance. I am more open to people, and I possess the emotional resources appropriate to each situation.

**Second stage of my healing**

During the Balkan Wars in the 1990s, I was watching a CNN discussion of the rescue of an American F-117 pilot downed in Yugoslavia. Judith, working in the attic, felt impressed to come chat with me. When I told her briefly what I was watching, she noted that I have within me the energy system of saver, conserver, ... rescue.

At the word *rescue* there was a really deep resonance within me, and I felt strong emotions rise up. Judith asked where earlier I’d felt this way. Suddenly I’m back in the same scene with my mother again as I was last Sunday. I said now (and we both recalled I had said the previous week), *“Somebody needs to help her.”*

**Lie 2: I am powerless to care about others (helplessness).**

There it is, the “rescue” energy constellation within me. It was probably there all along, but when I was unable to help my mother in her painful misery over the loss of her newborn son, the enemy inserted the lie that I didn’t care. For 54 years I had been unable to care, to feel, to relate to people in their pain.

I found the prospect of caring and not being able to do anything about it at age six too painful, so I shoved it deep inside and determined to not let anyone’s emotional pain touch me.

Locked up by the enemy for 53 years, I was determined to be free! I cried out the pain and frustration to Jesus. I cried for myself; I cried for others who could not receive needed caring from me. I see now that I have a real feeling for the concept of rescue. I have faith for “rescuing.” Many people need to be rescued, delivered out of the hand of the enemy.

Somehow in that second encounter with Jesus in the kitchen, I was set free of the bondage of helplessness in the face of others’ pain. I *can* help people by bringing them to the Eternal Healer.



### Third stage of my healing

Despair is a miserable feeling. When you have despair rooted inside you, the world always seems to be against you. It is difficult to put a positive spin on anything, because the future always looks somehow bleak and foreboding.

I wasn't really even aware that despair was buried deep inside my gut. I had always seen the world as a hostile place; life was an enemy to be conquered. Life had been my adversary, rather than my ally.

Judith and I were talking about having “hope.” I was saying that, because God has done so much for me over the past 2-3 years, I had some hope for better possibilities ahead. Somewhere in the discussion, the idea of “hopelessness” came up, and I welled up with tremendous emotion.

#### **Lie 3: Life is bleak, negative, hopeless; despair (hopelessness).**

As tears filled my eyes, I closed them and was immediately aware that I was in the spiritual dimension. God took me once again to the six-year-old's view of my mother lamenting over her baby's death.

*The word “despair” came to my mind, and I felt for a very brief instant the feeling of despair in that room. Suddenly Jesus grabbed my hand and we ran out into the sunshine.*

The heaviness was gone, and I felt free!

### Reflection point

What will you take away from this chapter?

Have you experienced stagnation? Despair? What caused it? How did you get out?

Meditate on this thought: “It takes so much to be a full human being that there are very few who have the enlightenment or the courage to pay the price. One has to abandon altogether the search for security and reach out to the risk of living with both arms. One has to accept pain as a condition of existence.” — *The Shoes of the Fisherman*

Pray, asking God to give you the courage to live the life He created you for.

### Your Response

Read Psalm 139:13-16: List five facts about your own creation that reinforce the idea that it was a miracle too.

Write a newspaper headline for the event of your birth.

Or write a poem praising God for the miracle of His creation in you.

Read Psalm 139:23: What did David ask God for? Do you need to pray this prayer?

Did you say “Yes” to your life? Did you experience any resistance in saying yes?

Do you have a big dream (something you want to do) that you are holding in your heart? Can you draw a picture of this dream?

What is blocking you from moving forward toward fulfilling your dream?

What items do you keep as a reminder or symbol of your life? What do they mean to you?