

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

**ANGER:
WHEN MAD IS BAD**

SIN FAMILY #3

RAGE
HATRED **VENGEFULNESS** **VIOLENCE**
ANGER
BITTERNESS

BILL BRIGHT & HENRY BRANDT

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

*Experience
True Healing and Freedom*

BILL Bright & Henry Brandt

Foreword by Tim LaHaye

© 2009 by Bill Bright & Henry Brandt. All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any way by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior permission of the copyright holder, except as provided by USA copyright law.

This book contains stories of people the authors met with over the years. In some cases, names and secondary details have been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

Unless otherwise identified, all Scripture quotations in this publication are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation, Second Edition*. Copyright © 1996, 2004. Used by permission of Tyndale Charitable Trust. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from *Holy Bible, New International Version*®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan.

Scripture quotations marked NKJV are taken from the *New King James Version*. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, 1990, Thomas Nelson Inc. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*, © Copyright 1960, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

ISBN 13: 978-1-4141-1223-7

ISBN 10: 1-4141-1223-8

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2008902641

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

—Psalm 147:3 NIV

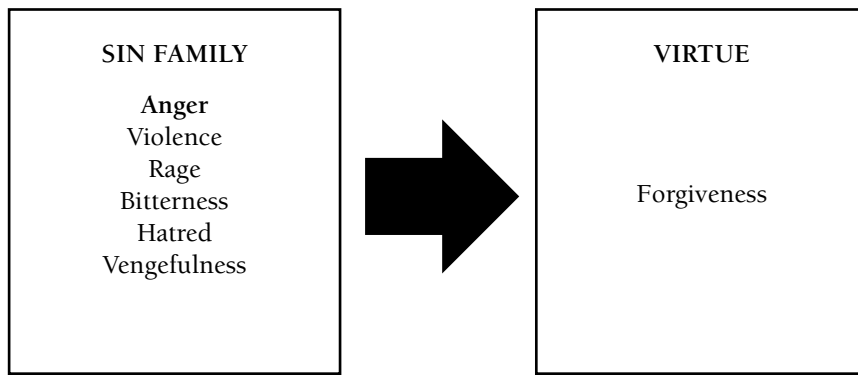
CONTENTS

Anger: When Mad Is Bad	1
Appendix A: How to Know God Personally	19
Appendix B: How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit	27
Appendix C: Spiritual Breathing	33
Endnotes	35
More Resources	37

Chapter 11



ANGER: WHEN MAD IS BAD



Some years ago, I (Henry) traveled to Zimbabwe for a conference and spoke about forgiveness. Afterward, a couple asked to speak with me in private. They were from Uganda, and they told me their story.

During the brutal reign of Uganda's Idi Amin, the couple received a note telling them that their twenty-six-year-old son had been kidnapped and was being held for ransom. Before the couple had met with Ugandan authorities how best they should respond, they received another note informing them that their son was dead.

Are You Angry?

The following self-evaluation quiz will help you determine whether you have a tendency toward anger.

- Do the people who know you well worry that you will blow up at them?
- Do you have a lot of enemies?
- Do you ever scheme to get back at people?
- Do you try to control situations by “powering up” on others?
- Have you ever been in trouble with authorities for fighting?
- Does the thought of certain people cause you to tense up or grow cold?
- Are there people whom you try to avoid because you are holding something against them?
- Have you had anger-related physical symptoms, such as stomach pains, high blood pressure, or sleeplessness?
- Do you keep reliving in your mind the wrongs others have done to you?

The father tried to locate his son’s body. In doing this, he was seized by soldiers and taken to the same prison cell where his son had been held. There he was whipped with leather strips before being loaded onto a pickup truck and dropped off at a street corner. As a parting shot, the soldiers shouted that if he ever tried to locate his son again, he would be killed.

Two years had passed. I met the couple in Zimbabwe. They wanted to know if I believed they were wrong to keep alive their hatred for the soldiers who had treated their family so cruelly. Might it not even be disloyal to the memory of their son if they were to forgive his murderers?

I have had my own struggles with anger and hatred from time to time, but never with a cause as reasonable as this hurting couple. I did not know what to say to them. “God, help me,” I prayed.

We sat in silence for a while. It seemed to me that God was telling me to gently urge this couple to let go of their hostility. So I suggested they needed to pray for a change of heart.

The man said in a trembling voice, “I am ready.”

The wife added, “So am I.”

The three of us knelt on the floor. I have never heard such moving prayers. We stood up afterward and embraced each other with tears of joy streaming down our cheeks.

The next day the man stood up at the conference and told the entire gathering that he and his wife were leaving a heavy burden behind.¹

A heavy burden indeed is the anger that many of us carry. Like the Ugandan couple, we may have good reasons for our emotion, but we are weighed down by it all the same.

Anger is a strong feeling of dislike, displeasure, or antagonism. It is connected to a host of other negative feelings and behaviors, including rage, hatred, bitterness, vengefulness, and violence. In this chapter we will look at how to lay down such burdens. Before that, though, we must learn how to separate sinful anger from the rarer, but still possible, forms of acceptable anger.

THE DANGER IN ANGER

Just as there is such a thing as justifiable pride, so also there is such a thing as righteous indignation. When Jesus chased the

merchants out of the temple (see John 2:13–17), He was angry at them for defiling God’s house and hindering Gentile worship. He had good reasons to have godly anger. Likewise, in some cases, there may be nothing wrong with our anger.

When we see unrighteousness or injustice, getting upset is a reasonable response. But at other times our anger is improper, such as when we misinterpret what is going on or are too quick to take offense or let our anger grow out of proportion to the cause. Our anger is also unrighteous if we hang on to it for too long.

Anger is inherently dangerous. That’s why the apostle Paul warned, “Don’t sin by letting anger control you. Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil” (Ephesians 4:26–27).² In other words, even if your anger falls into the category of righteous indignation, get past it quickly before it has a chance to harm you. Anger cherished becomes like rot or gangrene. It opens the door to hatred and other sins.

Archibald Hart wrote, “It is not the anger (as feeling) that is wrong, but...anger has the potential for leading you into sin.” If we choose to be angry at the wrong time or for the wrong reason, we are guilty before God. And if we are angry much of the time, we are dealing with a habitual sin—one that has a potential to harm not only those around us but also ourselves.

Rage is one term used to describe an excessive and uncontrolled anger.

- Do you have either a short fuse or a smoldering fire burning within you?
- Do others ever describe you as “cold” or “hard”?

LASHING OUT

I (Henry) arrived at my counseling session half an hour late, and I was nervous about making my apologies. The man I was making them to was Jay Carty, former professional basketball player with the Los Angeles Lakers—six feet, seven inches tall, and all of it muscle. With him was his wife, Mary.

My nervousness was due not so much to Jay’s size as to what I had learned from a temperament test Jay had taken. It showed that Jay was an extremely dominant, very hostile, and strongly expressive person. As I had expected, he glared at me for showing up late.

I ignored the look and got the session started by asking, “What’s the problem?”

Jay said, “I’m having trouble making a job change and thought you could help us sort out the decision-making process.”

“Well,” I said, “it’s easy to see what the problem is. There’s sin in your life.”

An uncomfortable pause followed. Finally, with an impatience that was impossible to disguise, Jay said, “Henry, perhaps you could elaborate just a little bit.”

Over the next few minutes, I pointed out the web of sin that his temperament test had revealed. I told him his anger was like a pot on boil. I told him that everyone irritated him and that when they failed him, he would blow up at them.

“You hotshot!” Jay shouted. “You don’t care about me, or you wouldn’t have forgotten about the appointment. Then, you pull this grandstand move by telling me there’s sin in my life, pat me on the rear, and send me on my way so I can tell people I talked to the great Dr. Henry Brandt. Well, thank you, but I’m not impressed. I think you’re a fraud.”

He got up and motioned for his wife to follow him out the door.

I said, “No, no, don’t go. Right now, Jay, how do you feel down in the pit of your stomach? Is it the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control?”

“That answer’s easy,” Jay snorted. “None of those qualities typifies the way I feel, at least not right now.”

I asked him pointedly, “Do you feel angry most of the time?”

It was so quiet that you could hear the three of us breathing. “Yes.”

Jay sat back down and poured out his story. He was someone with great gifts and a powerful personality who had been fixing most of his problems by just trying harder and expecting everyone else to follow his lead.

At last Jay asked, “Henry, how bad am I? What am I going to do? I’ve spent a lifetime learning to live this way.”³

Jay Carty is an example of someone whose anger built up over time and produced a lifestyle of rage. Others, though, have what's called a "short fuse." Their anger flares out suddenly and then subsides just as quickly. Is that type of rage any better?

A woman once came to evangelist Billy Sunday and tried to rationalize her angry outbursts. "There's nothing wrong with losing my temper," she said. "I blow up and then it's all over."

"So does a shotgun," Sunday replied, "and look at the damage it leaves behind!"

Wise Solomon said, "Control your temper, for anger labels you a fool" (Ecclesiastes 7:9).⁴

Whether rage is of the slow or the fast variety, it is so common that you might almost think that people *want* to be angry. And maybe some do—to their harm. Frederick Buechner said in *Wishful Thinking*:

Of the Seven Deadly Sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back—in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.⁵

Anger produces bodily changes that cannot be ignored. Here are just a few of the symptoms doctors and counselors have noticed in persons with rage:

- increased pulse rate
- faster heartbeat
- high blood pressure
- tight throat
- dry mouth
- hair standing on end
- enlarged pupils
- change in skin color
- tense muscles

- shaking or twitching
- insomnia
- stomach pains or nausea
- nagging body pains
- loss of appetite or difficulty in controlling food cravings⁶

In the saddest cases, such symptoms have contributed to the untimely deaths of many rage-filled men and women.

In *Anger Is a Choice*, one of the coauthors tells about visiting a seventy-two-year-old minister who was on a tirade about the medical treatment he had been receiving. The author said to the minister, “Paul, if you don’t stop this, you’re going to kill yourself!” Within two days, Paul was dead of a heart attack.

Beyond the physical effects, rage is also spiritually destructive. Jesus declared in no uncertain terms, “If you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment!” (Matthew 5:22). Furthermore, He said that anger is akin to murder. If you are a person with a rage problem, regardless of the legitimacy of its cause, you are in the wrong.

Suppressing rage—turning “outrage” into “inrage,” so to speak—is not the answer. You need to confess your sin. You need to work through the process of soul healing that appears at the end of this chapter so that your body and spirit may be cleansed of this serious condition.

God Himself is “slow to anger” (Exodus 34:6). With His help, we can be too.

He can also help to free us from the related attitudes of hatred and bitterness.

God is “slow to anger.” With His help, we can be too.

THE WOLF OF HATRED

A little boy came to his grandfather in tears and declared that he hated a schoolmate. The grandfather said he understood the feeling, then told this story: “It is as if there are two wolves inside me. One is good and does no harm. He lives in harmony with all around him and does not take offense when no offense was intended.

“But the other wolf...Ah! He is full of anger. The littlest thing will send him into a fit of temper. He fights everyone, all the time, for no reason. He cannot think because his anger and hate are so great.

“It is hard to live with these two wolves inside me, for both of them try to dominate my spirit.”

The boy asked, “Which one wins, Grandfather?”

The grandfather replied, “The one I feed.”

The wolf of hatred is powerful. Unrighteous anger feeds the hatred and allows it to grow more powerful still, until the wolf stretches out its fangs and claws to tear at those around. Such a beast lies within us when we hate. If we are to become holy people, we must starve this vicious predator.

Bitterness is like hatred in that it results from the harm others have done us, but it stays closer to home. While hatred is a feeling of intense hostility toward another person, bitterness is a rancor we nurse in our hearts to keep our anger alive. Hatred is the hostile emissary that we mentally send out to our enemy; bitterness is a fire that smolders deep inside. Both are sinful.

There are some who think hatred is reasonable and just, even admirable. Jesus acknowledged this attitude when He said, “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy” (Matthew 5:43). In fact, Leviticus 19:18 does say to love your neighbor. The religious teachers called Pharisees interpreted this verse to mean it was okay to hate your enemies.

Jesus, though, had a surprising take on the matter. “But I say, love your enemies!” (Matthew 5:44). And what He had in mind by “love” was not some weak “Oh, all right, I love you” attitude but a love demonstrated in action. The examples He gave of love for enemies included the following commands: “Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you” (Luke 6:27–28).

Bitterness, likewise, is out of bounds for Christians. One early Christian leader wrote, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled” (Hebrews 12:14–15 NKJV).

*A beast lies within
us when we hate.
We must starve this
vicious predator.*

Bitterness, then, is not only like a smoldering fire; it is also like a root that puts out weedy growth in our spirit if given half a chance. We cannot just prune it back. We must pull it out, roots and all.

Like its cousin hate, bitterness will eat away at us. If we have an ongoing problem with either hate or bitterness, we need to take aggressive action. If we do not, one error we can be led into is revenge.

GETTING MAD AND GETTING EVEN

No one can say for certain how the infamous Hatfield-McCoy feud got started. One thing for sure is that around the time of the Civil War the Confederate-sympathizing Hatfields of West Virginia conceived a hatred for the Union-sympathizing McCoys across the border in Kentucky, and the McCoys returned the favor.

Provocation quickly led to escalation. In 1878 Randolph McCoy accused one of the Hatfields of stealing a pig. The case went to court and the Hatfields won. Later a Hatfield boy got a McCoy girl pregnant and was rewarded with a severe beating by her relatives. Then in 1882 Ellison Hatfield was killed, starting a run of murders that would reach eleven over the next decade.

How bitter is revenge! How destructive!

We may not aim a rifle at anyone from behind a tree, but in a myriad of ways we get back at people who have hurt us. When others wound us by their words or actions, Revenge whispers in our ears, "Give him the cold shoulder!" or "Say something equally harsh in return!" or "Spread a rumor that will wreck her reputation!" Sometimes people will wait for years, nursing their resentment, until they are in a position to harm the one they hate.

Does any of this sound familiar to you? Is any of it acceptable behavior in the eyes of God? The apostle Peter wrote, "Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you" (1 Peter 3:9). His colleague Paul similarly instructed readers,

Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

“I will take revenge; I will pay them back,”
says the Lord.

—Romans 12:19⁷

God reserves judgment for Himself. Only He knows all the facts and is capable of rendering justice fairly and comprehensively. True, He gives properly instituted human leadership the authority to handle matters of earthly justice as best they can. But He does not give us as individuals the right to punish those who have hurt us.

Revenge is reputed to be sweet, but it swiftly turns sour.

Revenge is reputed to be sweet, and in fact for a while it may replace our feelings of hurt with a sense of triumph. But revenge swiftly turns sour because inside we know our revenge has lowered us to the level of our antagonist and has laid destruction upon destruction. God is wise in reserving for Himself the prerogative of avenging wrongs.

Besides trusting Him to handle matters of justice, what should we do?

Instead of helping a relationship head downward in a spiral of attack and counterattack, we are to do our best at reversing the direction the relationship is going in. Peter said that rather than retaliating against others, we should “pay them back with a blessing” (1 Peter 3:9). Paul said that instead of avenging ourselves, we should “conquer evil by doing good” (Romans 12:21).

Such seemingly illogical responses really make a great deal of sense. They are not likely to make matters worse, and they might make the situation a great deal better. When Abraham Lincoln was chided for not seeking to destroy his enemies, he replied, “Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?” Paying back evil with good puts a stop to the cycle of revenge.

But in real life—in our lives—is this possible? Can vengeful people learn to lay down their arms and embrace their enemies?

Certainly, it is not easy or enjoyable—nobody is saying that. But possible? Yes. Just ask the Hatfields and the McCoys.

Both clans are still in existence today. And although violence between them ended with the 1800s, the feud continued in the form of legal disputes over timber rights and cemetery plots for another century. But shortly after the conclusion of the final court case between them, the two families joined together to put a formal end to the feud.

On June 14, 2003, representatives of the two families signed a proclamation that read, “We do hereby and formally declare an official end to all hostilities, implied, inferred, and real, between the families, now and forevermore. We ask by God’s grace and love that we be forever remembered as those that bound together the hearts of two families to form a family of freedom in America.”⁸

God bless the Hatfields and the McCoys! And God bless you if you will keep from returning evil for evil and will return good instead.

Revenge’s counterpart, violence, is another evil practice we must avoid.

VIOLENCE: THE SHORTCUT THAT GOES NOWHERE

If asked, a park ranger in British Columbia will be glad to show off the interlocked antlers of two bull moose. Apparently the moose began fighting, their antlers got stuck together, and they could not pull free. Both moose died because of their fighting.

Sometimes people are a lot like animals.

While in some of us anger goes underground as hatred or bitterness, in others it comes right out in the open as violence. Men especially (though not exclusively) will, on occasion, resort to physical coercion in an attempt to solve their problems. Violence seems like such a direct way to react to a situation—not to mention a quick release for pent-up feelings of anger!

The headlines about violence that grab our attention are ones like these:

- STUDENT OPENS FIRE AT SCHOOL, KILLS FOUR
- MOVIE STAR ACCUSED OF DROWNING WIFE
- FACTORY WORKER KILLS BOSS, GUARD, SELF

What we do not see (or at least pay as much attention to) are news stories about the less extraordinary kind of violence that goes on in homes and public places every day. What would you think if you saw these headlines?

- HUSBAND BEATS WIFE, THIRD TIME THIS MONTH
- FRIENDS DRINK AT BAR, FIGHT IN PARKING LOT, REGRET IT LATER
- MAN WHO ATTEMPTED RAPE SAYS WOMEN HAVE SLIGHTED HIM

This kind of “everyday” violence may be too common to get much notice, but its contribution to the sum of human misery is hard to overestimate.

The consequences of violence go beyond the obvious results of physical pain and wounding. Even if no one is permanently injured by an act of violence, the scars on the inside may take a long time to heal—if ever. And one violent person may be producing another. Few things are as self-perpetuating as violence.

The violent person is also degraded by his own violence. He knows he has sunk to an animalistic level. If he has any conscience left, he is ashamed of causing another human being pain. He has to worry about legal ramifications. He is caught in the consequences of his actions—just like the bull moose.

In part for such reasons, violence is like vengeance in that it is something individuals are not permitted to do. The state has the right to pursue justice through criminal punishment and war, but individuals should never use violence (unless necessary for self-defense). Certainly, we should never instigate violence just because we are angry.

The apostle Paul said, “Don’t participate in the darkness of wild parties and drunkenness, or in sexual promiscuity and immoral living, or in quarreling and jealousy” (Romans 13:13). In other words, fighting is just as bad as other types of sin like drunkenness and adultery. Aggressive violence cannot be justified.

When Peter drew a sword to protect Jesus from the men who had come to arrest Him, Jesus ordered the hot-tempered disciple,

“Put your sword back into its sheath” (John 8:11). He would say something like that to any of us who would try to solve our problems with violence. Keep your hands to yourself. Put down the knife. Lock up the gun.

If you are habitually violent, work through the soul-healing process. And if you think you may be on the verge of hurting another person, get professional help—now.

THE FORGIVENESS FACTOR

What do you do if you are filled with rage or hatred or bitterness? What do you do if you are vengeful or violent? By God’s grace, you get rid of the sin of anger and replace it with the virtue of forgiveness.

Anger is an emotion that is set off when someone else has done something we do not like. We may be quite right in disliking what the other person has said or done. Sometimes, in fact, the offense is monstrous, as in the case of the Ugandan couple whose son was murdered. But because the offense has a personal origin, the only way to free ourselves of the destructive emotion we feel and move ahead in life is to forgive the person who did wrong.⁹

Of course, when we have been hurt, something inside us screams “No!” to the idea of forgiveness. It seems unjust. And do you know what? It is. When we forgive, we pay a price for a wrong that someone else has done. What does that remind you of?

We follow in Christ’s footsteps when we forgive.

Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. It was not just or fair, but He willingly did it so that mercy would triumph over justice. We follow in His footsteps when we forgive one who has committed an offense against us.

Another reason we might resist forgiving is that we conceive of unforgiveness as a type of revenge. We believe we are hurting the one who has hurt us if we withhold our forgiveness. That is foolish thinking. We are only hurting ourselves by holding on to a grudge. In the words of writer Anne Lamott, “Not forgiving people is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.”

For these reasons, forgiveness does not necessarily mean suddenly having a warm feeling toward the one who has hurt us.

“Forgiveness is not a feeling, first and foremost. It is a choice that goes beyond feelings; it is an activity of the *will*.”¹⁰ We choose first to forgive, and we pray that the loving feelings will follow. This is loving by faith.

What about “forgiving and forgetting”? Can we forget the offense against us once we have forgiven the offender? Of course not. We will still *recall* the hurt—but we need not *relive* the hurt. As David Augsburger said, “The hornet of memory may fly again, but forgiveness has drawn out the sting.”

And what about reconciliation? A restored relationship should be our goal whenever it is a possibility. When the one who has offended us is a fellow Christian, we can follow the guidelines of Matthew 18 to initiate a process of confrontation that starts privately and adds on pressure and publicity if needed. When the offender is a non-Christian, we can still seek restoration of our relationship by humbly approaching the other and discussing what happened.

But reconciliation requires two. The other person may be *unwilling* to admit the wrong he or she has done and seek to restore the relationship. Or maybe you are *unable* to reconcile with the other person. You may not know how to get in touch with the offender anymore, or perhaps that person has died. And if the other person still presents a threat to you, as in the case of an abuser, it might not even be wise to reestablish contact. In such cases, remember that you can still forgive the person. Unlike reconciliation, forgiveness requires only one.

Hard as it is, forgiveness is a blessing to us because it frees us from anger and all the ill effects that anger brings upon us. That is why God both commands and enables forgiveness. “Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32). “Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others” (Colossians 3:13).

The New Testament consistently links our forgiveness of others to God’s forgiveness of us. Jesus once told a parable in which a servant was forgiven for a vast sum of money the servant owed

a king. The servant turned around and shook down a fellow servant for neglecting to repay a much smaller sum. (See Matthew 18:21–35.) Like the unforgiving servant, our sins against God are immeasurably greater than any offense someone else has committed against us. So let us forgive as we have been forgiven.

As often as someone angers you, just so often can you forgive. That's the way to beat the anger habit.

SOUL PRESCRIPTION FOR ANGER

Are you struggling with anger or an anger-related sin habit? We have outlined a five-step process to help you repent and heal in this area of your life. Take all the time you need with each of the steps below.

Step 1: Adopt a Correct View of God

Almost certainly, a distorted perception of God's nature lies at the core of your problem with anger. We do not know exactly what that is for you. But quite possibly you are overemphasizing the wrath of God while underemphasizing His faithful love. Consider these key truths about God's nature.

- God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternity instead of condemnation.

The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness."

—Exodus 34:6

- God is merciful and expects us to extend His mercy to others.

There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when He judges you.

—James 2:13

Search the Scriptures for everything you can find about God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. Allow what you find out about Him begin to change the way you think about God and about yourself as God's child.

Step 2: Revise Your False Beliefs

You may be an angry person because you have developed some mistaken ideas about yourself and other people as well as how to get along in life. Do you believe that? Well, ask yourself these questions:

- Do you believe you are justified in your anger?

Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.

—Proverbs 19:11

- Do you believe that your anger is uncontrollable?

Don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry.

—Ephesians 4:26

- Do you believe that anger is a useful tool in life?

People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness.

—Proverbs 14:29

Along with those suggested here, there are many more false beliefs that can keep you a slave to anger. Seek clues in Scripture for ways that your ideas have gone off track, contributing to your anger problem. Ask the Holy Spirit to use biblical truth to change your conscious and unconscious beliefs so that you are living in truth and not falsehood. He will do it!

Step 3: Repent of Your Sin

Are you ready to admit that you are angry and to give it up? In what particular ways (rage, violence, revenge, and so on) do you express your anger? Identify your anger and “own” it.

When you are ready, ask God to forgive you for your anger. You can pray the following prayer (or another like it in your own words). Insert the word for your particular anger problem in the blank spaces.

God, I am an angry person, especially in the area of _____ . And I know that is sinful. I am sorry for how the flames of my anger have singed others, and especially I am sorry for how I have grieved You. Please forgive me for my anger now. Cleanse me completely from the sin of _____ so that it is gone from my life. Furthermore, give me the power never to return to my angry ways again.

I want to be like Jesus, merciful and kind. In His name I pray, amen.

If you have harmed others with your sin, apologize to them. Seek reconciliation and offer restitution where appropriate.

Step 4: Defend against Spiritual Attacks

The enemies of your soul—the world, the flesh, and the Devil—do not like it when you repent of your anger. They will stir up your anger again if you let them. Get ready to defend yourself against these enemies.

- In the world’s value system, anger is considered good. The world would tell us that anger confers power. But you can overcome this false system if you hold fast to God’s values, which tell us that those who control their anger have the real spiritual power.
- Anger can feel good. Our flesh, or sinful nature, urges us to get that good feeling back by letting ourselves be filled with

rage again. So when you feel that kind of desire rising within you, remind yourself that the flesh is dead and you do not have to satisfy its desires. Turn to the Spirit to help you want what God wants for you: a forgiving spirit.

- Satan will use your sense of personal rights and your selfishness to goad you into angry outbursts and attitudes. Put on the armor of God to resist the Devil's schemes. Above all, put on the "shoes of peace" (Ephesians 6:15), which enable you to move around in harmony with all your Christian brothers and sisters.

Are you ready to be in control of your anger, instead of its being in control of you? The battle has begun and will not be over soon. So the time is now to stand strong in the strength of Lord and ask the Holy Spirit to supernaturally equip you to defeat the enemies of your soul.

Step 5: Flee Temptation

Many of us find that our anger has certain triggers. Walking through a minefield, you have a much better chance of survival if you know where the danger is and learn to avoid it.

- Focus on your relationship with God.
Cultivate your relationship with God through the spiritual disciplines of prayer and meditation. Learn to hear God's voice so that His whisper of peace will sound louder in your ears than the cry of temptation to lash out in anger.
- Latch on to God's promises.
Search Scripture for verses and stories that emphasize the danger of anger and the value of forgiveness. Memorize Scriptures that can help you in times of temptation. One relevant scriptural passage is the parable of the unforgiving servant. Read it in Matthew 18:21–35.
- Establish safeguards.

Take specific steps to avoid whatever triggers your anger. Consider these examples:

- If you want to get revenge against somebody, do something good for that person in secret.
 - If you have a tongue that is quick with a harsh retort, learn to quickly ask the Holy Spirit for help before saying anything in a potentially explosive situation.
 - Ask a trusted Christian friend to hold you accountable in your commitment to not get angry.
-
- Expect victory.
As a believer, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. He will help you put a clamp on your anger before it can do any damage. Believe that you can go from being an angry person to being a person of forgiveness.

Visit www.SoulPrescription.com for more insights and resources, and to download a free leader's guide for small group Bible studies.

Appendix A



HOW TO KNOW GOD PERSONALLY

Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, so there are spiritual laws that govern your relationship with God.

Law 1: *God loves you and created you to know Him personally.*

God's Love

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

—John 3:16

God's Plan

This is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.

—John 17:3

What prevents us from knowing God personally?

Law 2: *People are sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love.*

Human Beings Are Sinful

All have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard.

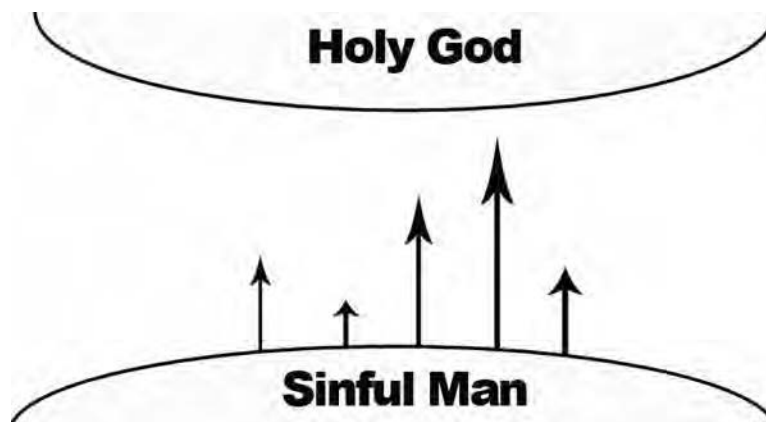
—Romans 3:23

The human race was created to have fellowship with God. But because of our own stubborn self-will, we chose to go our own independent way, and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Human Beings Are Separated

The wages of sin is death [spiritual separation from God].

—Romans 6:23



This diagram illustrates that God is holy and humanity is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that people are continually trying to reach God and establish a personal relationship with Him through their own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion—but they inevitably fail.

The third principle explains the only way to bridge this gulf.

Law 3: *Jesus Christ is God's only provision for human sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love.*

He Died in Our Place

God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

—Romans 5:8

He Rose from the Dead

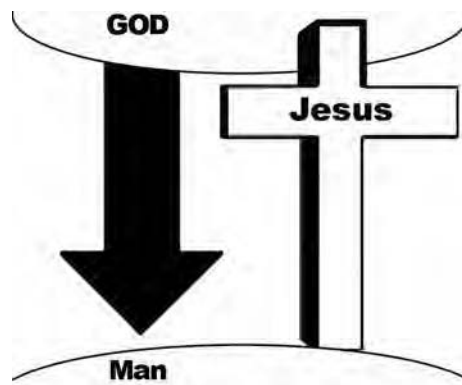
Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at one time.

—1 Corinthians 15:3–6

He Is the Only Way to God

Jesus told [Thomas], “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

—John 14:6



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place and pay the penalty for our sins.

It is not enough just to know these truths.

Law 4: *We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then we can know God personally and experience His love.*

We Must Receive Christ

To all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

—John 1:12

We Receive Christ through Faith

God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

—Ephesians 2:8–9

When We Receive Christ, We Experience a New Birth

After dark one evening, a Jewish religious leader named Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to speak with Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "we all know that God has sent you to teach us. Your miraculous signs are proof enough that God is with you."

Jesus replied, "I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the Kingdom of God."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

Jesus replied, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new life from heaven. So don't be surprised at my statement that you must be born again. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit."

—John 3:1–8

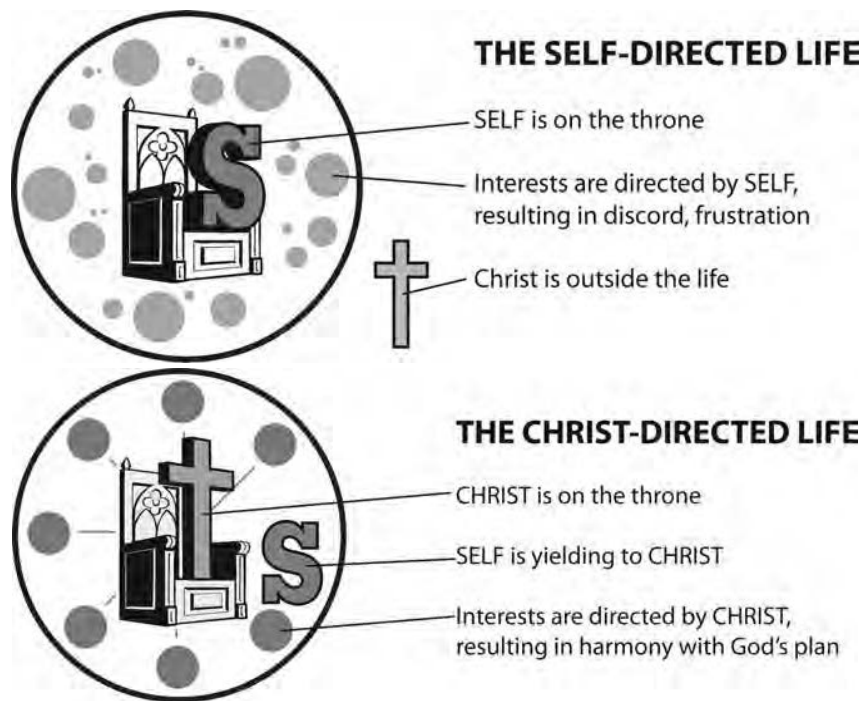
We Receive Christ by Personal Invitation

[Christ said,] "Look! Here I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends."

—Revelation 3:20

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of our will.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives.



Which circle best represents your life?

Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

You Can Receive Christ Right Now by Faith through Prayer

Prayer is talking with God. God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

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

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If it does, pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

How to Know That Christ Is in Your Life

Did you receive Christ into your life? According to His promise in Revelation 3:20, where is Christ right now in relation to you? Christ said He would come into your life and be your friend so you can know Him personally. Would He mislead you? On what authority do you know that God has answered your prayer? (The trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word.)

The Bible Promises Eternal Life to All Who Receive Christ

“This is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. So whoever has God’s Son has life; whoever does not have his Son does not have life. I write this to you who believe in the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.”

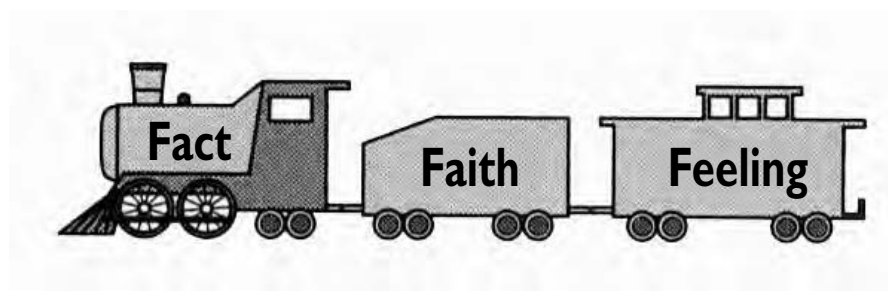
—1 John 5:11–13

Thank God often that Christ is in your life and that He will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). You can know on the basis of His promise that Christ lives in you and that you have eternal life from the very moment you invite Him in. He will not deceive you.

An important reminder...

Do Not Depend on Feelings

The promise of God’s Word, the Bible—not our feelings—is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship among fact (God and His Word), faith (our trust in God and His Word), and feeling (the result of our faith and obedience). (Read John 14:21.)



The train will run with or without the caboose. However, it would be useless to attempt to pull the train by the caboose. In the same way, we as Christians do not depend on feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word.

Now That You Have Received Christ

The moment you received Christ by faith, as an act of your will, many things happened, including the following:

- Christ came into your life (Revelation 3:20; Colossians 1:27).
- Your sins were forgiven (Colossians 1:14).
- You became a child of God (John 1:12).
- You received eternal life (John 5:24).
- You began the great adventure for which God created you (John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Can you think of anything more wonderful that could happen to you than entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Would you like to thank God in prayer right now for what He has done for you? By thanking God, you demonstrate your faith.

Suggestions for Christian Growth

Spiritual growth results from trusting Jesus Christ. “The righteous man shall live by faith” (Galatians 3:11). A life of faith will enable you to trust God increasingly with every detail of your life and to practice the following:

- G** Go to God in prayer daily (John 15:7).
- R** Read God’s Word daily, beginning with the gospel of John (Acts 17:11).
- O** Obey God moment by moment (John 14:21).
- W** Witness for Christ by your life and words (Matthew 4:19; John 15:8).
- T** Trust God for every detail of your life (1 Peter 5:7).
- H** Holy Spirit—allow Him to control and empower your daily life and witness (Acts 1:8; Galatians 5:16–17).

Fellowship in a Good Church

God's Word admonishes us to "not neglect our meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25). Several logs burn brightly together, but put one aside on the cold hearth and the fire goes out. So it is with your relationship with other Christians. If you do not belong to a church, do not wait to be invited. Take the initiative; call the pastor of a nearby church where Christ is honored and His Word is preached. Start this week and make plans to attend regularly.

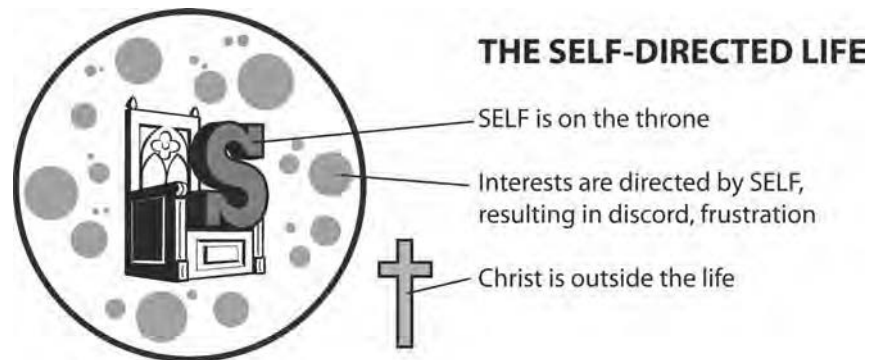
Appendix B



HOW TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Every day can be an exciting adventure for the Christian who knows the reality of being filled with the Holy Spirit and who lives constantly, moment by moment, under His gracious direction.

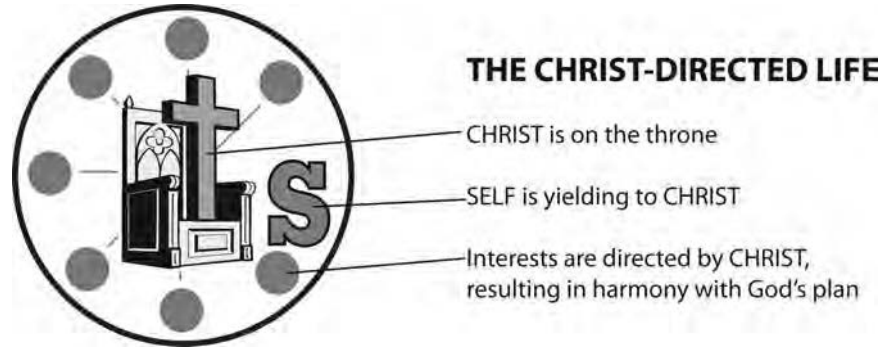
The Bible tells us there are three kinds of people:



1. The Natural Person: One who has not received Christ

People who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means.

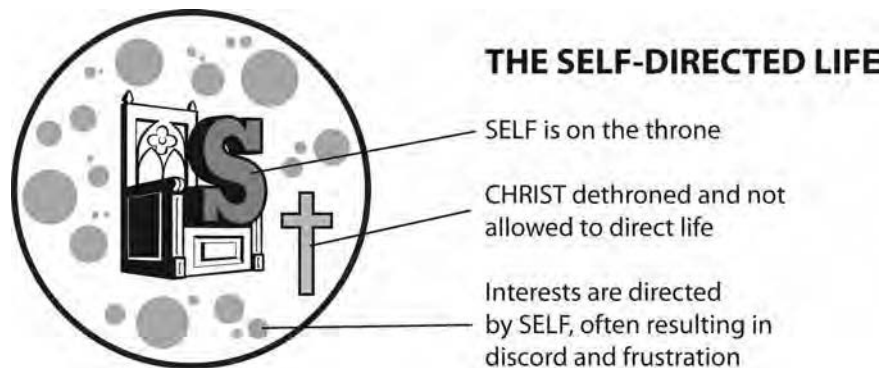
—1 Corinthians 2:14



2. **The Spiritual Person:** One who is directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit

We who have the Spirit understand these things.... We have the mind of Christ.

—1 Corinthians 2:15–16



3. **The Worldly (Carnal) Person:** One who has received Christ but who lives in defeat because the person is trying to live the Christian life in his or her own strength

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to mature Christians. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. I had to feed you with milk and not with solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your own sinful desires. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your own desires? You are acting like people who don't belong to the Lord.

—1 Corinthians 3:1–3

The following are four principles for living the Spirit-filled life:

1. God has provided for us an abundant and fruitful Christian life.

[Jesus said,] “My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.”

—John 10:10

[Jesus said,] “I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”

—John 15:5

When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

—Galatians 5:22–23

When the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

—Acts 1:8

The following are some personal traits of the spiritual person that result from trusting God:

Christ-centered
Empowered by the Holy Spirit
Introduces others to Christ
Effective prayer life
Understands God’s Word



Understands God’s Word
Trusts and obeys God
Experiences love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness,
faithfulness, gentleness,
goodness, and self-control

The degree to which these traits are manifested in the life depends on (1) the extent to which the Christian trusts the Lord with every detail of life and (2) his or her maturity in Christ. One who is only beginning to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be discouraged if he or she is not as fruitful as more mature Christians who have known and experienced this truth for a longer period.

Why is it that most Christians are not experiencing the abundant life?

2. Worldly Christians cannot experience the abundant and fruitful Christian life.

Worldly (carnal) people trust in their own efforts to live the Christian life:

- They are either uninformed about, or have forgotten, God's love, forgiveness, and power (Acts 1:8; Romans 5:8–10; Hebrews 10:1–25; 2 Peter 1:9; 1 John 1; 2:1–3).
- They have an up-and-down spiritual experience.
- They cannot understand themselves—they want to do what is right but cannot.
- They fail to draw on the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life (Romans 7:15–24; 8:7; 1 Corinthians 3:1–3; Galatians 5:16–18).

Some or all of the following traits may characterize the worldly person—the Christian who does not fully trust God:

Unbelief

Disobedience

Poor prayer life

No desire for Bible study



Legalistic attitude or critical spirit

Impure thoughts, jealousy, guilt

Worry, discouragement

Loss of love for God and others

(Those who profess to be Christians but who continue to practice sin should realize that they may not be Christians at all, according to Ephesians 5:5 and 1 John 2:3; 3:6–9.)

The third truth gives us the only solution to this problem.

3. Jesus promised the abundant and fruitful life as the result of being filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life by which Christ lives His life in and through us in the power of the Holy Spirit (John 15).

- One becomes a Christian through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, according to John 3:1–8. From the moment of spiritual birth, the Christian is indwelt by the

Holy Spirit at all times (John 1:12; 14:16–17; Colossians 2:9–10). (Though all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, not all Christians are filled—that is, directed and empowered—by the Holy Spirit on an ongoing basis.)

- The Holy Spirit is the source of the overflowing life (John 7:37–39).
- The Holy Spirit came to glorify Christ (John 16:1–15). When one is filled with the Holy Spirit, he or she is a true disciple of Christ.
- In His last command before His ascension, Christ promised the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to be witnesses for Him (Acts 1:1–9).

How, then, can one be filled with the Holy Spirit?

4. We are filled (directed and empowered) by the Holy Spirit by faith. Then we can experience the abundant and fruitful life that Christ promised.

You can appropriate the filling of the Holy Spirit right now if you:

- Sincerely desire to be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 5:6; John 7:37–39).
- Confess your sins. By faith, thank God that He has forgiven all of your sins—past, present, and future—because Christ died for you (Colossians 2:13–15; Hebrews 10:1–17; 1 John 1; 2:1–3).
- Present every area of your life to God (Romans 12:1–2).
- By faith claim the fullness of the Holy Spirit, according to

His command: Be filled with the Spirit.

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.

—Ephesians 5:18

His promise: He will always answer when we pray according to His will.

We can be confident that he will listen to us whenever we ask him for anything in line with his will. And if we know he is listening when we make our requests, we can be sure that he will give us what we ask for.

—1 John 5:14–15

Faith can be expressed through prayer.

How to Pray in Faith to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

We are filled with the Holy Spirit by faith alone. However, true prayer is one way of expressing our faith. The following is a suggested prayer:

Dear Father, I need You. I acknowledge that I have sinned against You by directing my own life. I thank You that You have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross for me. I now invite Christ to again take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with the Holy Spirit as You commanded me to be filled and as You promised in Your Word that You would do if I asked in faith. I pray this in the name of Jesus. As an expression of my faith, I now thank You for directing my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit.

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If so, bow in prayer and trust God to fill you with the Holy Spirit right now.

How to Walk in the Spirit

Faith (trust in God and His promises) is the only way a Christian can live the Spirit-directed life. As you continue to trust Christ moment by moment,

- Your life will demonstrate more and more of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and will be more and more conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Your prayer life and study of God's Word will become more meaningful.
- You will experience His power in witnessing (Acts 1:8).
- You will be prepared for spiritual conflict against the world (1 John 2:15–17), against the flesh (Galatians 5:16–17), and against Satan (1 Peter 5:7–9; Ephesians 6:10–13).
- You will experience His power to resist temptation and sin (Romans 6:1–16; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 1:19–23; Philippians 4:13; 2 Timothy 1:7).

Appendix C



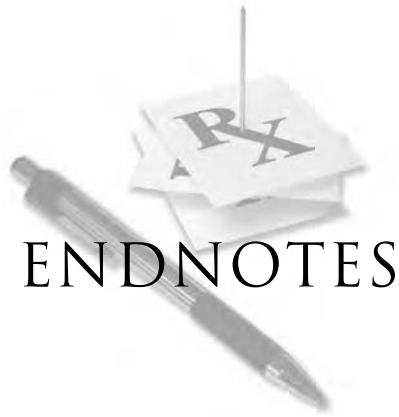
SPIRITUAL BREATHING

If you become aware of an area of your life (an attitude or an action) that is displeasing to the Lord, even though you are walking with Him and sincerely desiring to serve Him, simply thank God that He has forgiven your sins—past, present, and future—on the basis of Christ’s death on the cross. Claim His love and forgiveness by faith and continue to have fellowship with Him.

If you retake the throne of your life through sin—a definite act of disobedience—breathe spiritually. Spiritual breathing (exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure) is an exercise in faith that enables you to experience God’s love and forgiveness.

1. *Exhale:* Confess your sin—agree with God concerning your sin and thank Him for His forgiveness of it, according to 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:1–25. Confession involves repentance—a change in attitude and action.

2. *Inhale:* Surrender the control of your life to Christ, and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith. Trust that He now directs and empowers you, according to the command of Ephesians 5:18 and the promise of 1 John 5:14–15.



ENDNOTES

1. Adapted from Henry R. Brandt and Kerry L. Skinner, *The Heart of the Problem* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 123–125.
2. Paul was quoting Psalm 4:4.
3. Adapted from Henry R. Brandt and Kerry L. Skinner, *The Heart of the Problem* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 140–145.
4. See also Proverbs 12:16 and 14:29.
5. Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 2.
6. Adapted from Henry R. Brandt and Kerry L. Skinner, *The Heart of the Problem* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 149.
7. Paul was quoting Deuteronomy 32:35.
8. Stephen Leon Alligood, “American Profile,” June 14, 2003, CBS News, www.cbsnews.com, accessed November 2003.
9. Even when someone is angry at an impersonal event, such as a hurricane that swept away his house, he is really angry at a person—namely, God.
10. Tim LaHaye and Bob Phillips, *Anger Is a Choice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 122.



MORE RESOURCES

Free Discipleship Courses

Sign up for one of these weekly personal development courses at BiblicalCounselingInsights.com/courses/.

From Coping to Cure

Why are so many Christians unhappy? From Coping to Cure by Dr. Henry Brandt looks at the relief available through people helping people, through human efforts apart from God. Then, the lessons explore the many dimensions of Christ the Cure: God's healing love can transform the most miserable life into one of comfort, joy, and deep personal peace. Lessons are sent once per week.

Keys to Happy Family Living

Sent once per week, Keys to Happy Family Living by Dr. Henry Brandt is written for anyone who desires to be the best marriage partner and the best parent possible. Happy, successful parenthood is based upon a successful partnership, which in turn requires two individuals who themselves are happy, contented and competent.

I Want Happiness Now!

Are you dejected and desperately unhappy? Good news! You can find relief from your frustrated, hopeless condition resulting from your response to the circumstances and people in your world. In this weekly series, *I Want Happiness Now!*, Dr. Henry Brandt reveals how you can tap into the resources freely given to us by God so you will be a truly radiant, contented and joyful person.

The Struggle for Inner Peace

This weekly study addresses the problem that many Christians hold hatred, fear, resentment, jealousy, and malice toward others. As a result, fellowship with these persons and the Lord is broken, joy is lost, and God's peace is not enjoyed. Confessing and forsaking one's sinful ways in obedience to the Lord and His Word are necessary if the Christian is to enjoy God's peace. This series was written with the hope that many Christians will be helped in their "struggle" for inner peace, released from anxiety, and set free to experience the "fruit of the Spirit" which includes peace (Gal. 5:22).

More Free Resources

Find more free personal growth options available through affiliated ministries at JesusOnline.com/resources.

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

WHEN WHAT YOU CHOOSE DESTROYS THE LIFE YOU WANT...

Does your life feel out of control? Are you struggling to free yourself from a web of destructive habits that are holding you in bondage? Are you engulfed in an endless cycle of trying to change but continually falling back into sin?

Soul Prescription offers the healing and hope you seek. With a unique, methodical, and biblically based approach to eliminating sin habits, this book will help you evaluate your behavior and attitudes in light of God's standards. As the authors gently lead you through the process of turning away from debilitating habits, you will be free to embrace Holy Spirit-empowered virtues.

God longs to see you living in the joy and freedom that He promises in His Word. You can live a victorious Christian life. Soul Prescription will show you how.

Dr. Henry Brandt is often called the "Father of Modern-Day Biblical Counseling." For decades he personally counseled individuals to evaluate their heart attitudes and behavior in the light of biblical teaching and guided them to a godly solution. His teaching continues to be a source of inspiration to people throughout the world through the Henry Brandt Foundation's resources and Web site:

www.HenryBrandtFoundation.org.

Dr. Bill Bright was devoted to holy living and spent more than five decades building and leading Campus Crusade for Christ. Fueled by his passion to present the love and claims of Jesus Christ to every person on earth, he wrote the booklet The Four Spiritual Laws, which has been printed in 200 languages and distributed to more than 2.5 billion people. Find out about his 100 other books and pamphlets at:

www.BrightMedia.org.