

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

**DISSATISFACTION:
THE RESTLESS HEART**

SIN FAMILY #5

ENVY COVETING COMPLAINING
DISSATISFACTION
INGRATITUDE **GREED** **THEFT**

BILL BRIGHT & HENRY BRANDT

SOUL PRESCRIPTION

*Experience
True Healing and Freedom*

BILL Bright & Henry Brandt

Foreword by Tim LaHaye

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He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

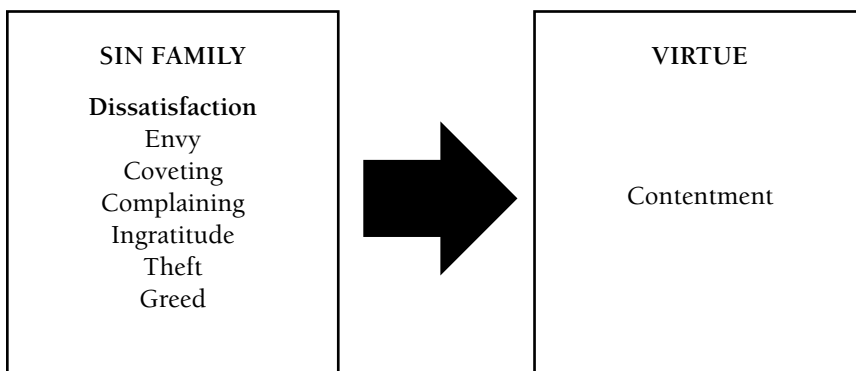
—Psalm 147:3 NIV

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DISSATISFACTION: THE RESTLESS HEART



In his autobiography, *Just As I Am*, Billy Graham told the story of meeting two men on a Caribbean island he was visiting with his wife, Ruth.

One of the wealthiest men in the world asked us to come to his lavish home for lunch. He was seventy-five years old, and throughout the entire meal he seemed close to tears.

“I am the most miserable man in the world,” he said.
“Out there is my yacht. I can go anywhere I want to.

I have my private plane, my helicopters. I have everything I want to make me happy. And yet I'm miserable as hell."

We talked with him and had prayer with him, trying to point him to Christ, who alone gives lasting meaning to life.

Then we went down the hill to a small cottage where we were staying. That afternoon the pastor of the local Baptist church came to call. He was an Englishman, and he too was seventy-five. A widower, he spent most of his free time taking care of his two invalid sisters. He reminded me of a cricket—always jumping up and down, full of enthusiasm and love for Christ and for others.

"I don't have two pounds to my name," he said with a smile, "but I'm the happiest man on this island."¹

One man rich and miserable, the other poor and joy-filled. Worldly values would tell us that the two men ought to have swapped attitudes. So what is the truth of the matter? Why are some people chronically dissatisfied, while others are content with the way things are? There must be something fundamentally flawed in the soul of one who is always dissatisfied. It must be a sin issue.

Having said that, we hasten to add that not all dissatisfaction is sinful. For instance, there is nothing wrong with dissatisfaction at sin and injustice. We *should* be dissatisfied with these wrongs and strive to correct them. (Your reading this book presumably reflects a godly dissatisfaction with habitual sin in your life.)

There is also nothing wrong with a dissatisfaction that exists because so much still remains to be done to build Christ's kingdom. If God has given you a vision for what He wants you to accomplish for Him, you certainly may let your dissatisfaction with your partial progress impel you to greater work in the future. Ambition and contentment are not necessarily opposed to one another.

The kind of dissatisfaction we are concerned with here is the kind that says, “I want more money, more stuff, more fun, more comfort in life—and I deserve it. I’d better take over the responsibility for myself; God isn’t doing a good enough job.”

But dissatisfaction is not only a slap in the face of God; it is also a way we rob ourselves of the joy we might have day by day, because we obsess about what we might have in the future instead of enjoying what we *do* have in the present. And as we become restless, resentful, and bitter, other people naturally prefer not to be around us.

Contentment ought to be the birthright (or rather, the new-birth right) of all Christians. However, not all enjoy contentment. What about you? Are you dissatisfied? Do you have a problem with envy or greed? Is your attitude marked by complaining and ingratitude? Are you prepared to steal and grab to get what you want?

Read on. From personal experience, we (Bill and Henry) know how strong the pull of greed or discontentment can be. But we also believe that the following scriptural truths will convict you of dissatisfaction. The soul prescription will help you root contentment in your soul like a vigorous new plant.

THE GRASS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE

One day years ago, I (Henry) was riding a horse across a ranch in Texas. The ranch property stretched over the horizon, with the only intrusion being the highway that ran through its middle. Now, you would think that the cattle on such a vast ranch would have all the grass they want, wouldn’t you? But what did I see? I observed a cow stretching its neck through the barbed-wire fence to nibble grass on the highway’s right-of-way.

Isn’t that like us? We have so much, but we want more. If somebody else has got it and we do not, we want it. Even if we do not need it, and even if God has offered no indication that He wants to give it to us, we think it has got to be ours.

This attitude goes by the name of *envy* or *jealousy* or *covetousness*. (For our purposes, we’ll use the words interchangeably.)

Are You Dissatisfied?

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

- Do you dwell on what you would like to have more than on what you do have?
- Do you complain to others or God about what you are lacking?
- Do you neglect to thank God for the good things He has given you?
- Do you look at others’ advantages in life and wish you had what they have?
- Do you scheme to gain more money and possessions than you really need?
- Are you tempted to take what belongs to others?
- Do you think of your possessions as belonging to you rather than to God?

Whatever you call this attitude, it is an improper craving for something another person possesses to such an extent that you cannot be happy unless you have it. It is a sinful desire for things that belong to your neighbor.

God condemned this attitude in the Ten Commandments, saying, “You must not covet your neighbor’s house. You must not covet your neighbor’s wife, male or female servant, ox or donkey, or anything else that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17).² As the commandment suggests, the object of covetousness might be almost anything.

Most obviously, the object of coveting might be a material possession. In the Bible, for example, we read how King Ahab coveted Naboth’s vineyard. (See 1 Kings 21.) We might want the new car our neighbor purchased or the big house our friend just acquired.

Also, we might be jealous over a person, perhaps someone else’s attractive spouse. That was what happened when David spied Uriah’s wife, Bathsheba, bathing in her yard. (See 2 Samuel 11:2–4.) Many a person today is similarly consumed with desire for another person’s wife or husband.

We might also be envious of a personal quality or advantage that another person possesses. Jacob envied Esau’s blessing and birthright as the older brother. (See Genesis 25:27). We might wish we had another person’s good looks or social ease or singing ability.

It is not always wrong to want a possession, person, or quality. There is nothing necessarily blameworthy about wanting to have a new car or to be married or to be able to sing well. It is when we desire *someone else’s* car or spouse or voice that we go wrong with envy. It is then that we sin and violate the tenth commandment.

Envy can become a habit as we brood over what we want.

Envy can become a habit as we brood over what we want. Our obsessive and misplaced desire can easily be compounded by other sins as we seek to get that which we lack from others. King Ahab murdered Naboth. David had an affair with Bathsheba. Jacob conned Esau out of his rightful blessing and birthright. All of these situations was the outworking of envy.

The message for us is simple: “Don’t participate in...jealousy” (Romans 13:13).

Meanwhile, another form of dissatisfaction—greed—is just as bad for the Christian.

UNAPPEASABLE APPETITE FOR WEALTH

Early media mogul William Randolph Hearst invested a fortune in collecting art treasures from around the world. One day Hearst read the description of a valuable art item, which he then sent his agent abroad to locate. After months of searching, the agent reported that he had finally found the treasure. To the surprise of Hearst, the priceless masterpiece was stored in a warehouse belonging to none other than William Randolph Hearst.

Hearst had so much that he did not even know what he had. But that did not stop him from wanting more. Greed had set him to running in a circle. It is like a hunger that is never satisfied but only becomes more voracious as it is fed.

Greed is the inordinate love of money and what money can buy. It is a form of dissatisfaction with one's financial position that results in striving selfishly for more money rather than seeking after God. Thus, money may displace the Lord at the height of our affections.

"You can be sure that no...greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God," warned the apostle Paul. "For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world" (Ephesians 5:5).

Jesus likewise said, "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24). Notice that Jesus did not say we *should not* serve two masters but that we *cannot*. It is impossible to combine ultimate obedience to God while having ultimate obedience to any other person or thing, including wealth.

The Bible is consistent in condemning greed. We are warned, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own" (Luke 12:15). And we are told, "Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have" (Hebrews 13:5). Nevertheless, greed is so widespread in our time that we might wonder if we live in the last days when "people will love only themselves and their money" (2 Timothy 3:2).

Greed, incidentally, is a temptation that affects rich and poor alike. Those of us with modest means cannot assume that greed is

a failing that belongs only to the William Randolph Hearsts of the world. What matters is not how much you have but how badly you want more and what you are willing to do to get it.

It is possible to make a distinction between an acceptable desire for money and a sinful desire. Ask yourself these questions to test whether your desire for wealth is acceptable to God.

What is your motive for wanting more money? Is it because you are having trouble meeting the basic needs and wants that you and your family have? Is it because you want to give more generously to the work of God? These are good reasons for wanting more money.

What is your plan for acquiring more money? While working to acquire greater wealth, will you trust God to meet your needs and never forget that He is what you need most of all? Will you honor Him by pursuing financial gain in a just and ethical way, remembering to be generous to others along the way?

If your desire for money meets the requirements, work as hard at it as you like! If you fail the tests, on the other hand, you should be concerned about the kinds of wickedness you are being drawn into. A selfish desire for money that we do not really need is a soul crippler.

Paul made the same point, by observing, “True religion with contentment is great wealth.”

Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.

—1 Timothy 6:6–10

Judas Iscariot's story bears out Paul's words in 1 Timothy. This man “was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples’

money, he often stole some for himself” (John 12:6). In the end he went to the religious leaders and asked, “How much will you pay me to betray Jesus to you?” (Matthew 26:15). They offered him thirty pieces of silver and he took it.

Once Jesus was arrested, Judas was overcome by remorse. He threw the blood money back, but it was too late. He killed himself, and the thirty pieces of silver were used to buy a cemetery where, perhaps, Judas himself was buried. (See Matthew 27:3–10.) Thus greed ended up where it naturally will (unless repentance intervenes first): in death.

But before greed comes to an end, it contributes to all kinds of evil effects. One of these may be thievery.

HANDS THAT TAKE INSTEAD OF WORK

When greed and envy mate, they often produce the ugly offspring of stealing. This is the sin of taking money or possessions belonging to another. The Bible affirms the right to property, and so seizing what belongs to another rates God’s condemnation. “You must not steal” (Exodus 20:15).³

To see the true extent of this sin, we need to define “stealing” widely enough. Failing to pay bills or taxes that we owe is stealing. Doing less work than we are being paid for is stealing. Using copyrighted material without the permission of the owner is stealing.

With such a definition, we can see that stealing is not so rare a problem as we might otherwise have thought. In fact, many people are willing to steal if they think they can get away with it. How quickly will normal law-abiding citizens resort to looting when the power goes out? How many “good” people download software or music files that belong to another?

The rule is this: if it is not yours, leave it alone. Never steal!

Paul was aware that stealing was a problem in the early church. He told new believers, “If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need” (Ephesians 4:28). The same word applies to you if you steal. You may be pleasantly surprised by the changes it brings to your life.

Many years ago, a businessman approached me (Bill) and shared his desire to experience the blessing of the Spirit-filled life. But he said that every time he got down on his knees to pray to be filled with the Holy Spirit, he was convicted about what he had stolen from his employer.

I told him to confess his sin to God, then go to his employer and make restitution. He was terribly concerned that his employer would fire him, but he agreed to go.

When the man shared his dishonesty with his employer, he was shocked by his boss's response. His boss actually congratulated him for his honesty. Then the employer offered a plan that would take a small amount of what the man had stolen out of his paycheck each week until all had been repaid.

The result was that, not only did the formerly dishonest man learn a valuable lesson, but also two days later he was by faith filled with the Holy Spirit!

Trust God. Respect others' property. Do the right thing—stop stealing.

Also learn to stop complaining about what you do not have. We see the prevalence of such ingratitude in a story from the life of Jesus.

THE ATTITUDE OF INGRATITUDE

In ancient Israel the destiny of persons with infectious skin diseases was a hard one. They were required to quarantine themselves from the rest of society, leading to loneliness and a struggle for survival. But those shunned by others received the loving attention of our Lord.

As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria. As he entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a distance, crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.

One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, “Praise God!” He fell to the ground at Jesus’ feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan.

Jesus asked, “Didn’t I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”

—Luke 17:11–18

Who are you more like: the grateful one or the ungrateful nine? If you have a problem with dissatisfaction, it is a safe bet that you are not as thankful to God as you should be, for a grateful attitude drives out dissatisfaction.

The ungrateful become complainers as soon as they put their regrets into words. To God and to others, they retail what is missing from their wish list for life. This is an insult to God—and it probably does not make them popular with their friends either. The Scriptures tell us, “Do everything without complaining and arguing” (Philippians 2:14). Instead of complaining, we should be praising God.

Paul declared, “All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ!” (Ephesians 1:3). If God gave us nothing but salvation through faith in His Son, along with salvation’s spiritual blessings, that ought to be enough to silence our complaining tongues forever. But He gives us much more.

Stop for a minute and think about what you *do* have. You would like to have more money—but how much money *do* you have? There are some things you would like to own—but what *do* you own? Perhaps your physical health is limited—but what *can* you do? How are you blessed with abilities that enable you to create beauty, with friends who bring richness to life, or with good memories that warm your heart in moments of solitude?

Whatever is good and perfect comes down to us from God our Father.

—James 1:17

A Bible secret to banishing dissatisfaction is thanking our gift-giving God. “Pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done” (Philippians 4:6). “Give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:20). The Bible even says, “Believers who are poor have something to boast about, for God has honored them” (James 1:9).

Gratitude is a like a lens that helps us refocus our attention from our perceived lacks to our actual blessings from God.

Gratitude is like a lens that helps us refocus our attention from our perceived lacks (which might not be good for us anyway) to our actual blessings from God. In this way, gratitude leads us to contentment and brings healing to our soul.

ALL IS WELL

The task of one with a dissatisfaction habit is not only to eliminate the sin of dissatisfaction from his or her life but also to cultivate the virtue of contentment. Contentment is a special benefit available to all followers of Jesus Christ. It is not something we can work up on our own. Rather, it is something we can receive as a gift while we cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s work in our lives.

In *The Art of Divine Contentment*, Puritan Thomas Watson offered one of the best definitions of contentment: “It is a sweet temper of spirit, whereby a Christian carries himself in an equal poise in every condition.” In other words, it is a kind of satisfaction that depends only on the presence of God in our lives, not on whether we are presently up or down in the changing mix of life’s circumstances.

Contentment is not consistent with unrighteous desires, for unrighteous desires will always trouble our spirit. However, being content does not necessarily mean we give up wanting things that are legitimately good. Thomas Watson observed of Hannah in the Old Testament, “Hannah’s spirit was burdened; ‘I am,’ says she, ‘a woman of sorrowful spirit.’ Now having prayed, and wept, she went away, and was no more sad; only here is the difference between a holy complaint and a discontented complaint; in the one we complain to God, in the other we complain of God.”⁴ We can pray to God for what we do not have even while we thank Him for what we do have.

The apostle Paul had discovered how to live with an equal poise in every condition.

I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.

—Philippians 4:11–13

When Christ fills your heart and mind, you can be at peace and content with the things, people, and circumstances our sovereign God has placed in your life. The only thing that truly satisfies is knowing Jesus Christ. Striving, coveting, and spending our time wanting what is not available to us can leave us broken and bitter.

God is orchestrating life's circumstances leading us toward the fulfillment of His plans for our individual lives and for history as a whole. Contentment is a result of trusting the fact that God knows perfectly what is best to give us and when. It is saying yes to His blessings upon us. They are enough; we need no more.

Contentment is a result of trusting that God knows perfectly what is best to give us and when.

Someday God will share with us all the wealth of heaven. Our lifestyle then will be far greater than even that experienced by the rich man in the Caribbean whom Ruth and Billy Graham visited, with none of the emptiness in his soul. And in the meantime, each of us who knows the Lord can enjoy the “endless treasures available to them in Christ” (Ephesians 3:8).

SOUL PRESCRIPTION FOR DISSATISFACTION

Are you struggling with some type of dissatisfaction, such as envy, complaining, or greed? 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

Flaws in your view of God can easily produce dissatisfaction in your life. For example, you may have made the mistake of looking

to God as your own personal genie who should grant your every wish. On the other hand, you may see Him as some miserly old hermit who would not give a bone to a dog. Either viewpoint would greatly affect your ability to be content and satisfied.

- God is sovereign, and He is in control of your life.

With my great strength and powerful arm I made the earth and all its people and every animal. I can give these things of Mine to anyone I choose.

—Jeremiah 27:5

- God is faithful. He will always do what is best for us.

So the LORD must wait for you to come to Him so He can show you His love and compassion. For the LORD is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for His help.

—Isaiah 30:18

Through searching the Scriptures, learn more about God as Sovereign Lord. As you do so, consider how flaws in your view of God might be at the root of your problem of dissatisfaction. Ask God to help you understand Him as He really is.

Step 2: Revise Your False Beliefs

The belief that we deserve everything we want and more does not line up with God's Holy Word. The belief that happiness comes with possessions or position is in direct opposition to God's truth. Such examples of false beliefs about people and life can fuel dissatisfaction. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you believe you would be happy if you had more money?

Don't love money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

—Hebrews 13:5

- Do you believe you would be happy if you looked different?

Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.

—1 Peter 3:3–4

- Do you believe you would be happy if you had a better job?

Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you.

—1 Corinthians 7:17

These questions reveal false beliefs that breed discontentment. Other such false beliefs are possible. Spend time searching the Word for its perspective on contentment. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your thinking has fallen off track and then to accept the truth.

Step 3: Repent of Your Sin

Are you ready to turn away from dissatisfaction? Begin by specifically identifying the way you tend to be dissatisfied (envy, ingratitude, or whatever). Next, pray a prayer of confession to God. If you wish, you may use the one below, inserting the name of your sin of dissatisfaction in the blank.

God, I know that everything I have is a gift from You. Yet I have been dissatisfied through _____. I realize that my discontentment is born from a selfish and sinful heart, and I am truly sorry for my attitude. Please forgive me and wash all the discontentment out of my heart. Make me able to put _____ behind me for good and learn to be content. In the name of Jesus Christ, 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

Remember, you must always be on your guard against attack from the three enemies of your soul: the world, the flesh, and the Devil. They will conspire to draw you back to your old habits of dissatisfaction.

- The world's value system perpetuates dissatisfaction as it preaches, "Always want more and better." Expose yourself to God's truth to the point that you have fully understood that a life of contentment is the best way to live.
- Your flesh, or sinful nature, will continue to crave its old objects of desire, whether it is more money, possessions, or people. Tell yourself every day, "My flesh is dead. I live by the Spirit now." Rely on the Holy Spirit for help in every temptation.
- Satan uses our neighbor's standard of living to breed discontent in our hearts. Put on "salvation as your helmet" (Ephesians 6:17) for protection from poisonous thoughts of envy.

Keep on the lookout for any temptation that would draw you back into your old ways of dissatisfaction. Seek God's strength to defend against spiritual attacks. His strength is sufficient.

Step 5: Flee Temptation

We are told in James 1:14 that the source of temptation lies in "our own desires." The desire for more, or for something different and new, is a catalyst for dissatisfaction. This desire must be kept under control over the long term by taking certain precautions.

- Focus on your relationship with God.
Do not be satisfied with a brief quiet time in the morning and a trip to church once a week. Develop a devotional life

that spreads into your whole existence. As you keep your thoughts on God and His kingdom, instead of the things of this world, you will be less susceptible to temptations of dissatisfaction.

- Latch on to God's promises.
Find verses in the Bible that are meaningful to you in your battle against dissatisfaction. Memorize these verses and recall them whenever temptation strikes. Here are two verses for your consideration:

If God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, He will certainly care for you.

—Matthew 6:30

The LORD will withhold no good thing from those who do what is right.

—Psalm 84:11

- Establish safeguards.
Make changes in your life that will keep you away from the most common temptations that have produced dissatisfaction for you. Be creative, and come up with as many changes as will help you. Then, don't forget to implement them!
Consider these examples to spark your own ideas:
 - If you find yourself envying something another person possesses, immediately thank God for one blessing He has given you.
 - If you tend to be greedy, volunteer at a homeless shelter or some other ministry to the poor that will help you see how comfortable you really are.
 - Ask a trusted Christian friend to hold you accountable in your commitment to not be so dissatisfied.

- Expect victory.
Remember that success in defeating the habitual sin of dissatisfaction can be found in the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. He is always working in you to make you more like Jesus, which includes being content. Yield to Him daily in anticipation of deliverance from the crippling habit of dissatisfaction.

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.

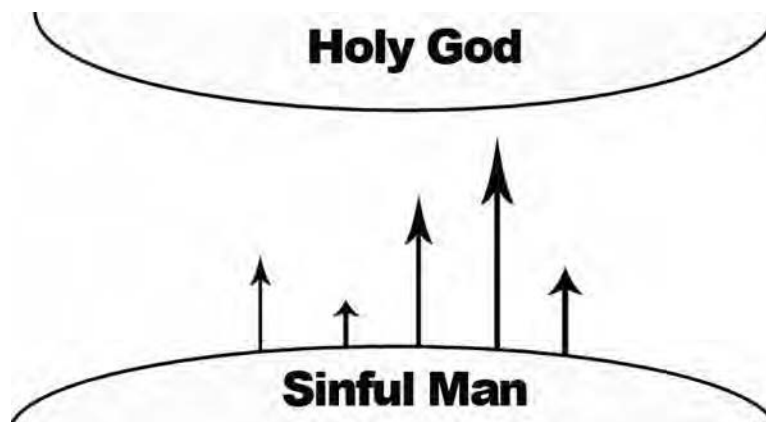
—Romans 3:23

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

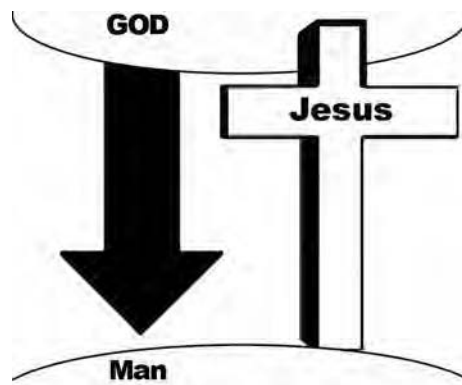
Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the twelve apostles. After that, he was seen by more than five hundred of his followers at one time.

—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

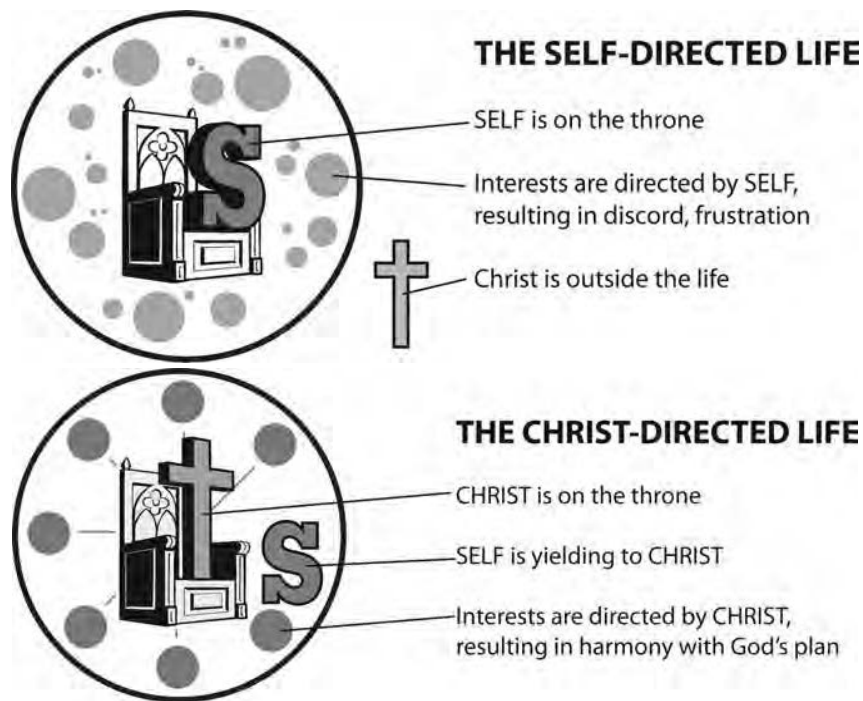
We Receive Christ by Personal Invitation

[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.”

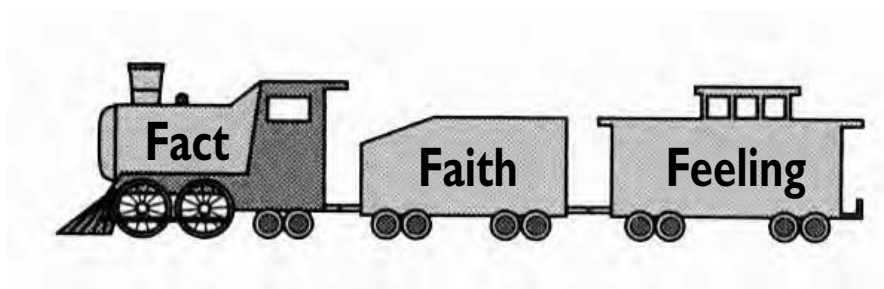
—1 John 5:11–13

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.

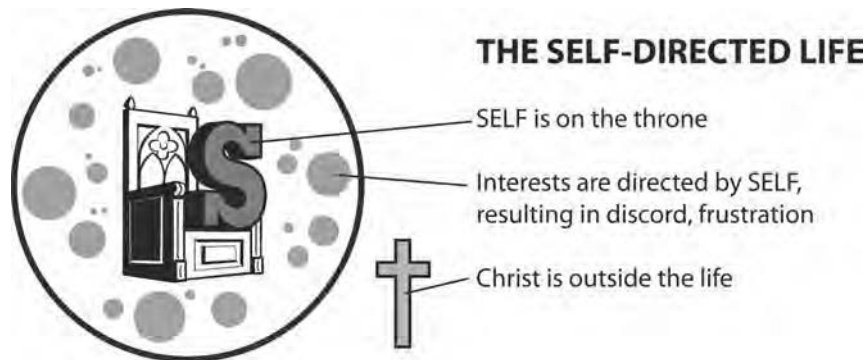
Appendix B



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.

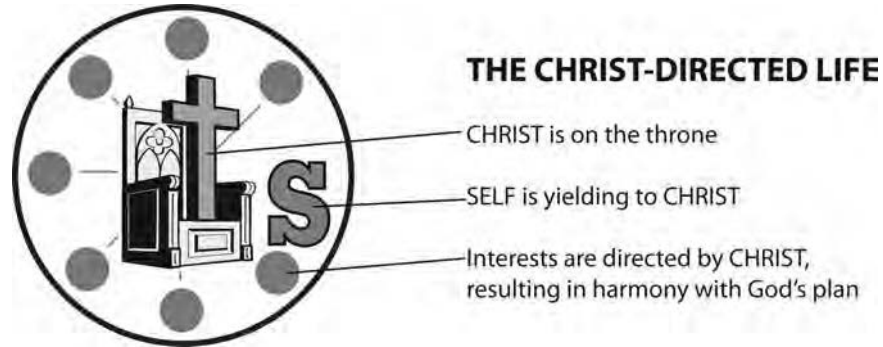
The Bible tells us there are three kinds of people:



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

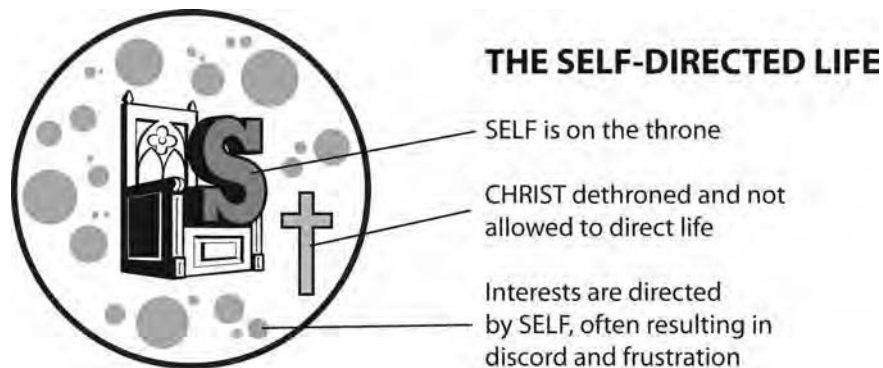
People who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means.

—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. Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 697.
2. For more on the tenth commandment, see Bill Bright, *Written by the Hand of God: Experience God's Love and Blessing through the Liberating Power of His Ten Commandments* (Orlando, FL: New Life, 2001), chap. 15.
3. For more on the eighth commandment, see Bright, *Written by the Hand of God*, chap. 13.
4. Thomas Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment: An Exposition of Philippians 4:11* (1653; reprint, Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1885), chap. 6. For Hannah's story, see 1 Samuel 1—2.



MORE RESOURCES

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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).

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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.

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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:

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